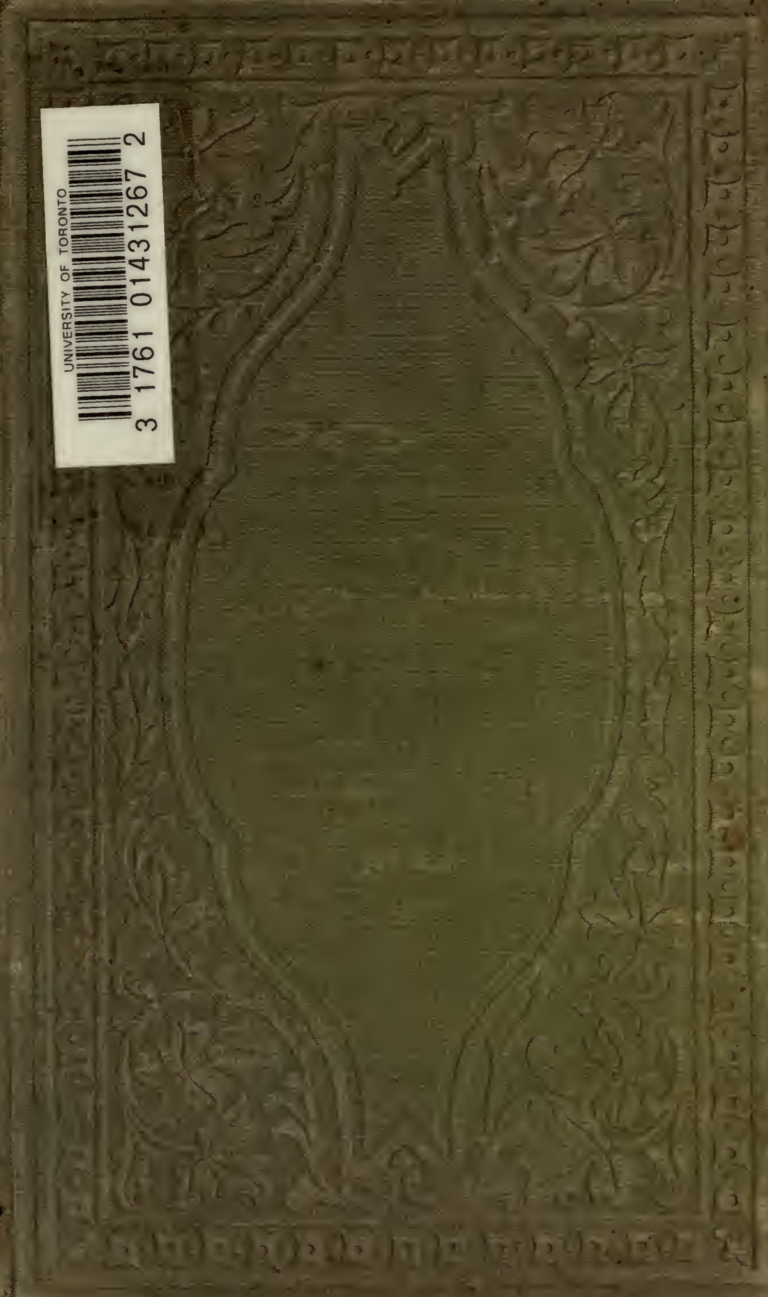

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THE

METHODIST EPISCOPAL PULPIT:

A COLLECTION OF

Original Sermons

FROM

LIVING MINISTERS OF THE M. E. CHURCH.

COLLECTED AND REVISED

BY REV. DAVIS W. CLARK, A. M.

GEORGE PECK, EDITOR.

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PREFACE.

The collection of this volume of sermons, from living ministers of the Methodist Episcopal Church, was undertaken with the approval and co-operation of several brethren eminent for their piety and wisdom, as well as for their official standing in the church. It was hoped that the enterprise, if successful, would result in an addition of some value to an important department of our church literature. Our preaching, from the origin of Methodism, having been for the most part extemporaneous, few preachers have written and preserved manuscript sermons enough to form a volume. Even many of our most eminent divines and pulpit orators have left nothing behind them except the remembrance of their living efforts, and the results those efforts are continuing to produce. Hence the limited number of contributions that have been made to this branch of our literature.

We refer, indeed, with just pride, to the sermons of Wesley, Watson, and Clarke. The first distinguished for simple, clear, and strong exhibition of doctrinal and practical truth: the second for the classic beauty of his style, the aptness of his illustrations, and the clearness with which he perceived, and the power with which he defended, gospel truth: the last for the keenness of his criticism, and the exactness of his presentation of the different features of his subject. And yet it cannot be possible that within so limited a range of authors, great as may be their excellences, the various tastes of all should be suited, and the wants of all be supplied. Hence we find the shelves of not only our ministers, but also of our members, piled up with sermons that have originated without the pale of our own church, and many of them presenting and advocating doctrines opposed to the very fundamental principles of our theology. Of the fact that our people seek books abroad, when they cannot find a reasonable supply at home, we do not complain; but we could desire the enlargement of the home supply, that the necessity for going abroad may be less urgent, and then the instances of it will be less frequent.

This collection has the advantage of a great variety in style and mode of presenting and illustrating truth, such as is not to be found in a volume produced by the labor of one individual. We may also add, without attempting to forestall any judgment upon the character of the individual sermons, that when a minister sits down to the production of one sermon for such an object, it may fairly be presumed that he devotes to it more thought, more labor, and more time, than it would be possible for him to devote to each, were he writing a volume of sermons himself.

We believe we have not overrated the importance of this mode of teaching and perpetuating truth. To the preacher, well-written sermons not only impart knowledge, but furnish models for the improvement of style, for the arrangement and illustration of subjects, as well as for their general discussion. We once heard a preacher boast, as though it were a thing commendable, that he never read sermons; and an involuntary sigh escaped us, as the boast called to mind the sad corroboration it had in his pulpit performances. He that would excel in the arts, studies the productions of artists; he that would excel in logic, logical discussions; and he that would excel in pleading, the lawyer's plea. So he that would excel as a Christian minister should place before him, and profoundly study, the distinguished models of his profession.

We commend also this volume to private individuals and families. We deprecate that spirit, too characteristic of the age, and, alas! too prevalent in the church, that demands continually light reading; reading that requires no effort of mind, and only delights the fancy at the same time that it enervates the understanding. We hail with joy every indication of a return of the taste and spirit of the age from this temporary aberration.

An apology is perhaps due for the tardy appearance of the volume. Most of the matter was in hand over a year and a half ago; but the whole had to pass under the scrutiny of the several editors made responsible by the General Conference; and, perhaps, in that respect, the present volume has claimed and received at their hands an unusual amount of attention. And again: application had been made to individuals in every conference of our connection, and various circumstances retarded our communication; some, who furnished sermons, were delayed by other and more imperious duties; and others, who had promised a contribution, in the end failed to furnish it. To overcome all these difficulties, and to bestow upon the work the amount of labor necessary, required time; but those whose sermons have been so long waiting to see the light, and the public who have had reason to expect the volume before this, may be assured that on our part there has been no unnecessary delay. Some names do not appear here that could have been desired; but all such names of course cannot be gathered into one volume, and we may be more successful in a second application, if the reception of this volume by the public should warrant the collection of another.

With these remarks we commend the volume to the favor of the church, and to the blessing of God.

D. W. Clark.

New-York, *October*, 1847.

P. S. To the authors we were not able to furnish proofs of their respective sermons, on account of their being so widely scattered, and the delay and derangement that would have been occasioned in the printing department. Every effort has, however, been made to secure accuracy.

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SERMONS.

SERMON I.

The Influence on the Human Mind of the Manifestation of God's Glory.

BY REV. MATTHEW SIMPSON, D. D.,
PRESIDENT OF INDIANA ASBURY UNIVERSITY.

"And he said, I beseech thee, show me thy glory. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. And he said, Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me and live."—Exodus xxxiii, 18–20.

CORRECT views of the divine character lie at the foundation of true religion. We may not indeed understand all the divine attributes, or even know their number, but with such as most directly influence human character and conduct we may become acquainted through nature and revelation. Where nations have acknowledged "lords many and gods many," discord and war have been, not mere casualities, but natural and almost necessary consequences of their theology. If Mars and Jupiter, Juno and Minerva, had conflicting interests in heaven, and if fierce contests raged among the gods, what else could be expected of their worshipers on earth? As there were "gods of the hills and gods of the valleys,"—as each nation traced its origin through a long line of ancestry to some one of the contending deities,—so it might be expected that each nation should be jealous for the honor and glory of its founder.

The unity of the Deity revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and the common origin of the human family expressly asserted, sweep away, at once and for ever, the greatest justification for hostilities, and all pretence for tyranny and oppression. We have but one God, and we are all brethren.

The attributes with which the divine character is invested have also a powerful influence on the mind. If to the Deity is ascribed, as in heathen mythology, the possession of the animal propensities and desires, then the worship will be conformable to such desires, and licentiousness and extravagance of every description will be mingled in the ceremonies. The rolling wheel shall crush its victim, the fire consume the infant offering, or purity be sacrificed unblushingly at the altar of the commanding deity.

Carrying forward the same train of thought, we shall find that even under the full light of the system of Christianity, the peculiar aspect in which the divine character is viewed will greatly modify Christian conduct and enjoyment. Notwithstanding all read the same revelation, and ascribe the same attributes to the Deity, yet perhaps each individual fixes in a different degree his estimate of the relation of these attributes to man; and possibly, in each mind, some one of the divine attributes is more regarded, or at least more constantly a subject of thought, than any other. Thus, upon one may rest a sense of the terrible majesty of God. He may seem to hear his voice as when it spake in such awful grandeur from the top of Sinai. On another may rest a sense of awe and veneration, and the still small voice seem ever to sound in his ears, "Be still, and know that I am God." To a third is presented most vividly the idea of holiness; and to a fourth, the idea, the triumphant thought, is, "God is love."

These various views must greatly modify our mode of approach before God. He whose mind is filled with ideas of terrible grandeur, and stern majesty, to whom every voice seems to proclaim, "Our God is a consuming fire," must, when his soul is penitent, approach even in prayer with overwhelming awe; while another, who regards the Deity as an affectionate Father, though he come confounded by a sense of his guilt, and melted at the thought of the amazing condescension of an offended Ruler, yet, viewing the extended arms of mercy expanding to meet the returning prodigal, even dares to "come *boldly* to a throne of grace."

Many of the young—and for them our remarks are made—are taught, even in the nursery, to clothe the Deity with attributes of vengeance. As they grow older the idea strengthens in their mind—Religion is a fearful thought—moroseness or terror becomes most intimately associated with their notions of Christianity, and they will not think of God because the idea is one of awful dread. And perhaps few passages in the word of God have been more frequently used to strengthen this impression upon the mind, than that part of our text, "For there shall no man see me and live."

Being fully persuaded that LOVE is the great characteristic of the Deity, as revealed through Christ, and that all young persons ought so to be taught, we propose to investigate—

I. What Moses desired when he prayed, "I beseech thee show me thy glory."

II. How far this desire was satisfied; and,

III. Why he could not obtain all that he desired.

I. First, then, let us consider the desire of Moses.

The "glory of God" is used in the sacred writings in several distinct meanings. Sometimes it is applied to an exhibition of some grand or astonishing appearance, indicating supernatural power and glory—sometimes to a display of the power, wisdom, and benevolence, of the Deity, in his works—sometimes to his dispensations toward man, as seen in the history of individuals—and sometimes to his purposes of mercy yet to be revealed. By further examination, we may see to which one of these the desire of the leader of Israel was directed.

1. Did he desire to behold some grand and glorious manifestation of the Deity; some outward form or shape to represent the great Jehovah? Why should such be his desire? In the first place, he must have had correct views of the Deity—he must have known that "God is a spirit,"—that "no man hath seen God at any time"—that a spiritual being cannot be materially discerned: and that though a glorious light, or thick clouds and sounds of power, may accompany his revelations to man, yet that light, or those clouds or sounds, indicate his presence, but do not represent his form;—they exhibit his power, not his person. We say, Moses must have known all this, because he was taught the knowledge of the true God from his

childhood—tradition from Shem to Moses passed through but few hands—and then he had been taught of God. Forty years had he wandered in solitude; a shepherd's life gave him time and opportunity for divine communion—for deep and holy reflection. When thus prepared, great revelations had been given to him, and he had conversed with God in the hallowed mount for forty days—had received the immutable law for the human family—and consequently must have known much of the divine character.

Our tendency to attach form to the Deity arises from the limited nature of our faculties. We are principally influenced by external qualities; we judge by them; and though we know a spirit has not the ordinary qualities of matter, yet we can form no distinct conception without associating some of them. When we think of an angel, or the spirit of a departed one whom we loved on earth, though we give no definite form, yet there is a something which flits before the mind. It may be a small bright cloud, so greatly attenuated as to be scarcely perceptible—a thin light mist—a floating vapor—but still there is form. So in our ordinary conceptions of the Deity, though we know he hath not body and parts, yet we imagine some appearance. It may be superlative brightness or terrible majesty; infinitely varied may be our conceptions as to magnitude, form, and locality; still there is an appearance. And this, we may casually remark, has ever been a fruitful source of idolatry.

As these views arise from the imperfection of our faculties, or from our want of knowledge, we cannot properly attribute them to one so advanced as Moses in knowledge, both human and divine. But, in the second place, why should he desire to behold such external displays of glory and power? He had worshiped at the burning bush; had been made the messenger of God to announce the most astonishing prodigies to the Egyptians; at his word, the Nile had flowed in currents of blood; darkness had in its most fearful form brooded over the kingdom; and the messenger of death had made every family to send forth a long, loud, piercing wail for the first-born. The sea had divided at his approach; the divine presence, as a pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night, had been his guide and protection; and, lastly, he had stood amidst the terrific scenes of Sinai until he exclaimed, "I do exceedingly fear and quake." What greater manifestations could he wish to behold? Surely these had been enough, more than enough, to satisfy the most enlarged desire.

2. May he have used the expression in the sense of the Psalmist where he says, "The heavens declare the glory of God;" desiring to understand more of creative power and skill? There can be no doubt that he earnestly desired to know all that could be known in reference to the great work of creation. But probably he had, before this time, received by revelation the history of the world's production. He had stood as on some distant eminence, and beheld when "He spake and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." He had seen the earth springing into existence, robed in innocence and loveliness, while "the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy." And having received such views, standing thus as a witness to this great fact, he could scarcely have asked for further description.

3. Is it probable that he desired to behold the glory of God, as manifested in his past government of the world? In this he had already been instructed. He had been made the world's sole historian for near two thousand years. Before his mind had passed the history of the race, with all its mutations;—its creation in innocence and majesty; its dreadful fall; ejection from Paradise; its stains of sin upon the earth, too deep to be effaced even by the rush of waters in the mighty deluge. Not only had he received Abrahamic traditions and all that Egyptian lore could furnish, but God himself had been his great instructor, to show to man, through him, his "glory," in the rise and fall of empires, the elevation or degradation of the race.

4. Since then his prayer could not refer to external exhibitions of the glory of the Deity, or to his creative power, or past government of the world, it only remains for us to turn toward the future. And if we view the circumstances surrounding him, we shall see that by his prayer, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory," he desired to understand the merciful purposes of God toward the Israelites, and through them to the world. He anxiously wished to understand more fully the whole plan of salvation, and to see the things that should happen in the "latter days."

That the Almighty had great designs in view in reference to the Israelites, he had a right to infer, from what had already been done for them. As when an architect collects in one place a vast quantity of materials, we have a right to expect the erection of some magnificent edifice; so, from previous and vast preparation on the part of the Deity, some event of momentous importance might be inferred. Abraham had been called from his native land and from among his kindred; had traveled over Canaan in expectation that it should be his, while yet owned and inhabited by powerful nations; his sons had been trained under peculiar circumstances; providentially led into Egypt, and then made a race of slaves, oppressed and shamefully treated; then rescued amidst signs and wonders "with a high hand and an outstretched arm," while the sprinkled blood of the slaughtered lamb prefigured a higher and holier deliverance of humanity from a still more accursed bondage. What connection this had with the hope of a Messiah who should wield a sceptre, and of a Prophet who should teach his people, he could not fully see: and what meant all this vast display in the wilderness; this heavenly direction; this manna from on high; the tables of the law; the tabernacle with its symbols and ceremonies, he could not fully comprehend, but in the earnestness of his soul, he prayed, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory."

Again, the circumstances through which he had just passed were of a most singular character. He had been upon the sacred mount. Israel had said, "Let not God speak with us;" and Moses had stood as their representative for forty days. But this very people who had heard the voice of God, had turned to idolatry at the foot of the mount. Their jewels had been collected and formed into a golden calf—the god of the Egyptians, from whose service they had been delivered. "They had set down to eat, and rose up to play." With what feelings must the man of God have turned from the mount; from converse with the Deity! But as he descended, and the sound of revelry burst upon his ear, he could restrain himself no longer; he dashed from his hand the tables of the law, written by the finger of Omnipotence, and they brake at the foot of the mount.

This act was censurable; and yet it furnishes no small indication of the feelings by which he was then influenced, the views by which he was governed. He may have supposed that the Israelites were honored because of their faith. They were free from idolatry. And it was right that an idolatrous nation should be destroyed to furnish this pious people a place of abode. But if so, what now shall be done to the Israelites? Bad as were the Canaanites, the Israelites were far worse. The people of Palestine had been taught idolatry; they had seen no miracles; no pillar of fire had guided them; no sea had been divided before them; they had not been fed from heaven; and had never heard the voice of God. Their sin was in part palliated by ignorance. But this people, while eating bread from heaven, with the throne of God in their midst, surrounded with the clouds of his grandeur hanging in awful magnificence as curtains around the mountain's summit, while he himself was penning for them his eternal law, as if to insult him, had made a golden calf. They had clothed it with the attributes of Jehovah; ascribed to it the miracles of the deliverance, and then, as in mockery, had cried out in the ear of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."

Nor was it only the thoughtless, the ignorant, the obscure, that engaged in this blasphemy. Aaron—the eloquent Aaron—the mouth of Moses, when he spake the word of God unto Pharaoh, with the elders of Israel, had joined in the impious rites. Under such circumstances, if Canaanites merited the wrath of God, seventy and seven fold should be the vengeance taken on Israel. If to the one were appointed the destroying sword, what but fire from heaven to consume, or a yawning earth to engulf, could be a fit punishment for the deeds of the other? Is it wonderful, that Moses should cast from his hands a law for which this people were now unprepared, and should, in the anguish of his heart, despair for them as to the mercy of God?

But vengeance does not fall from heaven. The people are still spared. And, after various periods of supplication, he is even answered, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." What can this mean—the idolatrous Canaanite cut off, the idolatrous Jew spared? Some great development must be in preparation, some grand display of the divine character. What can be the measure of that mercy, which is preceded by the preparatory act of the pardon of two millions and a half of people? His longing soul desires to know all the purposes of God. The act of mercy, just witnessed, kindled within him a greater love for God, a more earnest wish to fathom the depths of his goodness; and, with the vehemence of intense desire, he cries out, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory"—grant me a full exhibition of thy mercy and thy love.

II. Let us next consider how far this desire was satisfied.

In answer to this earnest prayer, the Deity replies, (v. 19,) "I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." Again in verses 21–23, "Behold there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock; and it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by; and I will take away my hand, and thou shalt see my back parts." And again it is said, in chap. xxxiv, 5–7, "And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation."

In this manifestation of the divine character to Moses, a few particulars may be noticed.

1. He proclaimed the *name of the Lord* before him. This probably refers to such a general view of the divine administration as exhibits the benevolence, holiness, and justice of God, intimately blended in the government of man.

2. He made all his *goodness* pass before him. This was probably a prophetic view of his mercy to the Israelites as a nation; in which was exhibited not merely his

sparing them on that occasion, but their settlement and continuance in the Holy Land, and the strict fulfillment of the promises made to the patriarchs in their behalf.

3. He showed him his administration as a *sovereign:* "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." Here was explained the difference of the treatment of Israel and Canaan. The latter had filled the measure of their iniquity as a nation, and no great benefit would be secured to the race by their national existence; while the former, though guilty of aggravated sins, might, as a nation, be made a blessing to the world. And that, for the accomplishment of some great good to man, a nation might be made the subject of *mercy* and *grace*, as to civil existence and prosperity, without any actual good deserts;—thus showing the *national* bearing of a passage, with which many pious individuals have been greatly perplexed. Yet the same principle may have, and doubtless often has had, application to individuals so far as *temporal position* is concerned, but not extending to their *salvation.* Yet both as to nations and individuals, when the day of employment shall be over, crime shall be visited with punishment; in the individual it might not be on earth, but in nations it shall be visited "upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation."

4. He gave him a prophetic view of the mission of Christ. This is indicated in the expression, "Thou shalt see my back parts." The Hebrew word in this place translated "back parts," refers to *time* as well as to *position.* And many able commentators and critics have referred this passage to the incarnation of Christ. This rendering conforms so well to the general use of the word, and to the tenor of Scripture, that there can be but little doubt of its correctness. And a free translation might be, "Thou shalt see me, as manifested in the *latter days.*"

The revelation appears to have been given to Moses, to strengthen his own faith, and to fit him for those arduous duties required of the leader of such a people. He is placed in a "cleft of the rock," and before him passes, as though spread out on an immense canvass, the representations of the future. He beholds the goodness of God to the rebellious Jew; sees him settled in the Holy

Land; kings and princes, wise and noble, and holy men, adorn their race, and Judea is a blessing to the world. And as the pillar of cloud, and the ark and its mercy seat, are sometimes called the glory of God; so he beholds in the institutions of his people, in the influences of his law, and the messages of the prophets, the "glory of God" spreading among men. But a shade falls upon the canvass. The Deity hides the future in his hand. Again his hand is removed—the indications of some grand coming event become closer and closer, as rays of hallowed light emerging to a focus, until at last, as the "glory of the only begotten of the Father," he beholds "the seed of Abraham, in whom the nations of the earth shall be blessed;" the "Shiloh" of Jacob, who grasped the departing sceptre of Judah. His soul leaps forward to meet him on the mount of transfiguration; joy swells his heart, and he can hear no more. He bows his head and worships.

III. We can now inquire why his petition was not fully granted.

1. From what has been already expressed, we are prepared to assume that it was not because in any manifestation there would be such terrific grandeur as should destroy human existence. For, first, Moses, we think, did not pray for external manifestations. These could be but symbols; and, however vast and magnificent the symbols might be, they never could adequately represent the divine character. But, secondly, there is no intimation made, as we think, that if an exhibition were given, it would be one of terrific majesty. If the dispensations of God toward man are pre-eminently characterized by mercy, and if his love cannot be expressed in language, and could be adequately revealed only in the incarnation and passion of his only begotten Son, then, if his character could be portrayed by symbols, if his glory could thus be made known, the symbols must be those of superlative benevolence, of condescending grace. We are aware that the expression of the apostle, "For our God is a consuming fire," is sometimes quoted to sustain the terrific view of the divine character; but this refers to his judgments upon the finally impenitent, and not to any manifestations or dispensations toward those who are still on probation.

2. The language employed in the text, "Thou canst not

see my face; for there shall no man see me and live," does not express any reason why man is unable to bear a view of the Deity. It simply declares the fact, that man cannot see the face of God. If, then, we inquire what is meant by the term "face," we are at once satisfied that it can have no such application to a spirit as it has to man. It must be used figuratively. And as the face is that part of the human form which remains uncovered and visible; that part which particularly indicates to others the definite person or individual; while other parts of the form are protected by raiment—so the term is used figuratively to signify that which is fully or clearly seen: and when applied to the Deity, would be a full revelation of the divine character; embracing all his plans of mercy and benevolence to his created intelligences.

3. The reason why man could not behold this and live, would not be because of its terror or majesty; but because the view of the riches of His grace, his compassion and benevolence, would excite emotions of reverence, of admiration, of love, and of joy, too overwhelming for humanity to bear. Each manifestation of the benevolence of God called forth songs of joy and ascriptions of praise from those who beheld them in ancient times. They rejoiced when they beheld the "bow of promise" spanning the arch of heaven with its glorious array of colors; when they saw the intervention of the pillar of cloud by day, and the guidance of the pillar of fire by night; when the sea parted before them, and they saw the salvation of God; when, for the deliverance of Israel, the Assyrian host was smitten before the angel of the Lord; when the divine glory descended and rested upon the tabernacle they had reared, and when, after their captivity, the second temple was erected and consecrated, amidst the tears and rejoicings of the restored captives. At these, and many other displays of benevolence and love, the ancient Jews rejoiced greatly. The spirits of the prophets rejoiced within them, when in vision they beheld the day of Christ; and when the devout Simeon beheld even the infant Jesus brought into the temple, his joy swelled into ecstasy, and feeling all he could desire, he cried out in rapture, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Now if, in these cases, a single view had

such an effect, what would be the result, if all the mercy and compassion of God, in its unbounded immensity and inexhaustible fullness, could, at one moment, be revealed to the human mind? Humanity could not bear the vision. No man can see "the face of God and live;" because the sublimity of the view would produce not only "joy unspeakable and full of glory," but joy at which the soul should be unfitted for residing in the body. To support this view we may reflect, that things exciting emotions even of a pleasurable character may extend so far as to become destructive, and that emotions of joy may in themselves destroy life. Light is pleasant, it spreads a halo of beauty and glory around the face of nature. The eye is never satisfied with the revelations which are made through its medium. Yet let that light, which thus spreads beauty around, fall upon the eye in the concentrated form of a ray from the meridian sun, and the power of vision is impaired, if not totally destroyed. What delight is communicated by means of sound! the melody of birds—the murmur of the waterfall—the music of instruments—and the sound of that sweetest and richest of all instruments, the human voice—awaken the most pleasurable emotions. And yet, let that murmur of the waterfall be changed into the roar of the cataract, and it is deafening. Sound may be so intense and prolonged, that the auditory nerve shall no longer respond to its vibrations.

The same is true of mental emotion. How the mind operates upon the body we cannot tell. No anatomist has detected the fine chords which bind spirit and matter together. But that the emotions of the mind do affect the body is universally admitted. Death from surprise, from fright, from terror, from all the depressing passions, has been by no means uncommon. And where death has not ensued, how many have been made maniacs for life! Nor is excitement confined to the unpleasant emotions. Scenes of sublimity may inspire, as much as scenes of terror can alarm. Man's soul responds as quickly and as strongly to the beautiful, the lovely, the good, as to that which offends or disgusts. And the emotions arising from the beautiful are no more under our control, and are no more limited in strength, than those of the opposite character.

In the every-day walks of life, who has not known of a case like this? A beloved son has left the home of fond parents to engage in commercial pursuits, or visit some distant place. By various causes his stay is prolonged, until at last the tidings reach his parents that he was wrecked off some rocky coast; or, that he perished in a fatal epidemic. They mourn for him as one that is lost; and they think of him only as in the spirit world. Years pass away, and though strangely preserved, his parents are not aware of his existence. He starts for home. Already he stands upon the hill that overlooks the scenes of his boyhood; the house, and trees, and shrubs, all stand as when he left; his heart exults at the thought of embracing his parents, and, thoughtless as to consequences, he hastily approaches. He opens the door. His mother gazes at him but a moment, cries, "My son, my son," throws her arms fondly around his neck, and swoons away in his arms. And instances have occurred, in which, from that swoon, there has been no recovery.

Nor can it be said that such cases occur only among the weaker and more nervous portions of the human family. All are excitable. They may differ as to the objects which excite, and as to the degree of excitement produced by any definite object, but still, let the subject be one about which their minds are deeply interested, and all are susceptible of intense excitement. The grave and steady citizen, in times of great political discussion, when he supposes the welfare of his country is dependent on the result of an election, becomes so deeply interested, that he loses his customary self-control. And when, at the close of a warmly contested canvass, his party triumphs, he tosses his cap wildly in the air, or joins in the loud exultation.

History informs us, that in the time of the great South Sea speculation in England, many, overjoyed by their success, became insane. At the restoration of Charles II., a number of the nobility were so affected by the recovery of their titles and estates, that they became diseased, and in a short time died. Leo X., one of the most renowned occupants of the Papal chair, was so rejoiced by a victory somewhat unexpectedly gained over his enemies, that he sunk beneath the excitement. The heir of Leibnitz, the celebrated mathematician, on finding that a chest, filled, as he supposed, with papers, contained a large quantity of gold, became so excited by the discovery, that he was seized with a fatal disease of the heart. The celebrated Rittenhouse, Pennsylvania's earliest astronomer, was selected to observe the transit of Venus across the sun's disc, in order that the correctness of many of the astronomical calculations might be tested. Having made all necessary arrangements and calculations, he watched earnestly for the expected transit; and when, at the calculated moment, he saw the dark boundary of the planet obscure the edge of the sun's disc, he was so overcome with emotion, that he swooned away, and his assistants were obliged to finish the observations. The immortal Newton, when he approached toward the completion of those calculations that demonstrated his discovery of the great laws of nature, and that gave him an imperishable name, and when he saw that his conjectures were about to be verified, was so deeply affected, that he was obliged to leave to others the work of completing his calculations. Near the close of the revolutionary war, the attention of Congress, and of the whole American people, was directed toward the armies of Washington and Cornwallis, and some movement was daily expected, having a powerful bearing upon our country's liberty. When the messenger arrived, bringing the joyful intelligence that Cornwallis had surrendered, the doorkeeper of Congress fell dead upon the floor of the hall.

If such, then, be the influence of joyful emotions, when arising from temporal subjects, will the effect be diminished by adding the revelation of the unseen and eternal? Can emotions excited by a view of the majesty, holiness, wisdom, and compassion, of the eternal Jehovah, be less strong, than those excited by considering a small portion of the work of his hands? And is it unreasonable to expect that the truths of Christianity will produce deep and powerful religious emotion? If an astronomer shall swoon, and a Newton sink overpowered by the discovery of some of the laws by which the Deity governs the material world; if Pope Leo should sink through joy at the triumph of his army, and a patriot die at the triumph of his country; if the unexpected inheritance of a chest of gold, or the restoration of rank and estate should destroy the action of vital organs; what shall be said of him on whose vision should burst the revelation of the laws of the Deity in the moral world; a full view of the riches of his grace in Christ Jesus, and of his amazing condescension and love in giving his Son to die to save a rebellious world fast sinking into destruction, and by his offers of mercy, and influences of his Spirit, raising feeble, sinful man, to the throne of his glory, having first purified him from all iniquity? If natural emotion may be so intense that the soul and body cannot unitedly subsist, well may it be said of such a manifestation, "There shall no man see me and live."

As a general inference from this subject, we may notice what a sublime view is thus presented of the revelation contained in the word of God.

1. It is a system of truth; in which, directly or indirectly, each separate truth leads to the great commanding truth of the being and attributes of God. This is the substance of revelation; God displayed in creation, in government, and in mercy to man. All other statements are but as secondaries revolving around their primary. The whole of revelation is such a view of the character of God as shall attract men to virtue, to happiness, and to glory. And as the character of God is infinite in its perfections, it can never be perfectly comprehended by finite minds. So much of the truth may be readily embraced as shall set man free from the power of other attractions, but there is still an inexhaustible remainder. The greatest minds may here be for ever engaged; intellect may learn much; prophets and kings may gaze with delight; and even angels shall desire to look into these sublime truths; but, like the parallel lines of the mathematician, there may be eternal approximation without perfect attainment.

2. But revelation is not merely a system of sublime truth. It is truth so presented as to affect our sensitive nature. It is not abstract speculation alone that is employed; our affections, our sympathies, are all enlisted. It is a system intended to operate upon man. It operates, first, by presenting the grand, the lofty, the majestic attributes of the divine character. And as the contemplation of great characters, the association with the great personages of earth, inspire the soul with lofty sentiments and high purposes, so the revelation of God's majesty becomes a powerful cause of elevation to man. It is fixing in an

immovable position a fulcrum which, more than the lever of Archimedes, shall move in elevating humanity toward the throne of God. It operates, secondly, by inspiring man with what is termed, technically, the sympathetic emotion of virtue. The performance of a brave, a noble, a patriotic, or a virtuous act, makes us desire to do the same. And when God reveals himself as a God of mercy, employing his omnipotence in acts of compassion, there is a voice that whispers to the heart through every such manifestation, "Be ye merciful, even as I am merciful." As that mercy is over all his works—as his sunshine and showers fall upon all alike—as his Son suffered for all—so the compassion taught us is universal. The soul under such influences desires mercy upon all. It sends the Bible on the wings of the morning, carrying light and animation to the uttermost ends of the earth. It sends the missionary to bear the glad tidings of great joy, which warmed even angels' hearts, to those that sit in the valley and shadow of death. It opens the school and founds the college, and seeks in every possible manner to benefit the race to which we belong, and toward which God hath showed such amazing mercy. It operates, thirdly, by exciting gratitude and joy for personal salvation—for pardon, for regeneration, and for adoption into the family of the Most High. The grateful soul is ready to exclaim, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me!" "What am I, and what is my Father's house," that I should thus be the subject of divine love! And that gratitude and joy become vastly expanded by the reflection, that similar favor is showed to all our kindred and to all our race; that our fathers were the subjects of mercy, and our children, and our children's children, shall inherit the same salvation; that in every clime, tongue, kindred, and people, may be experienced the same joys of pardoning mercy. At such a view we may well exclaim with the apostle, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" A fourth effect of such revelation is, that the soul desires to dwell constantly as in the presence of God. In him is all fullness—the treasures of wisdom and knowledge for the intellect, of grace and mercy for the soul. He becomes the Alpha and the Omega to the believing heart; and as the Deity grants such personal communion, the soul becomes refined and purified. The world diminishes in value; eternity, with all its spiritual blessedness, gradually unfolds before the moral vision; and the limit of joy is only found in the necessity of fitness for duties here. There is no limit in the fullness, glory, and sublimity, of the divine character. There is no limit in the willingness of God to impart, for "He that spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?" There is no limit of power as to the agent, "For we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." The limit is only found in the fact, that humanity can best discharge the duties imposed on us here when those manifestations are not overwhelmingly grand. Under this limitation the spirit of the Bible is a spirit of joy, crying constantly to the true Christian, "Rejoice evermore, and again I say, rejoice."

2. That such are the effects of the manifestation of God's mercy, we are further warranted in believing from the history of distinguished individuals. Moses, when the name of the Lord was proclaimed before him, and his goodness passed before him, "made haste and bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped." He adored and reverenced. But in the midst of that adoration there was no such alarm as made Israel say, "Let not God speak with us;" his soul desired still the presence of God, and his immediate prayer was, "Let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us." And such was the influence of the manifestations he received, that his face shone with such glory that the people could not look upon him unveiled; or, in other words, the manifestations of goodness and of glory were carried to the utmost possible point at which his usefulness to the people of Israel could remain. When Daniel was showed in prophetic vision the return of the captive Jews, and when the succession of empire was revealed, and the things that should happen in the latter days, he says, "There remained no strength in me;" and before he was able to hear the whole prediction, the angel touched him to strengthen him. On the mount of transfiguration the disciples were so overwhelmed that "they knew not what they said," or did not fully see the impropriety of their request, and yet were so

enchanted that they said, "Master, it is good for us to be here." The apostle to the Gentiles, who in the learning of his age and in strength of intellect had few if any equals, was so charmed with heavenly visions, that whether he was "in the body or out of the body" he could not tell; while the exiled apostle on the Isle of Patmos fell as one that was dead.

3. What an unfailing source of comfort and joy is opened for the Christian in the revelation which God hath given? His joy is not of this world, it is in God. The world may change, but God changeth not. God's glory never faileth —the Christian's spring of happiness never runs dry. What a beautiful figure to represent this life from God is that employed in the description of the New Jerusalem: "A pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb!" Of this the purified partake. The kingly and mediatorial government of God ever furnishes the just spirits with increasing admiration of the glory of God. And on earth true Christian comfort is the same. It is of God—it is in God. Property may vanish, friends may fail, health may be destroyed, but God still is immutably glorious, and from his throne still flows the pure river, clear as crystal, imparting life and joy to all that dwell upon its banks. It is a river of mercy, a river of grace, and he that drinketh of its water needs never thirst again for the turbid streams of earthly joy.

4. If then the effect of the manifestation of God's mercy and love be to elevate, to ennoble, and to rejoice the heart of man, why should not our minds dwell upon the divine character? We may not indeed "find out the Almighty to perfection," but we learn more and more of his glory. He did not chide Moses for his enlarged prayer, nor will he chide us for seeking the utmost knowledge and enjoyment of his grace. Christianity alone offers man knowledge and joy which can perfectly fill his expansive capacity, and for that knowledge and that grace unceasing effort should be made, and ceaseless prayer offered to the Most High. For this we may come *boldly* to the throne of grace.

5. And if the limit of manifestation of mercy is found in the circumstances of the creature and not in God, who

shall attempt to say what glorious enjoyment awaits the celestial citizen? Or who shall fix the limits to the amount of blissful manifestation which may be made to the soul when about to be released from its earthly duties and connections? It was a favorite opinion of many of the Roman and Grecian philosophers and poets, that the prophetic spirit came upon man in his dying moments. Aristotle, Socrates, Pythagoras, and even Homer, make allusions to it, and consider it in some manner connected with the soul's immortality; and Xenophon speaks of the soul's appearing godlike in its last moments with the body. What may have given rise to this view among pagan nations we know not; but among the Jews the dying patriarchs had the spirit of prophecy, and Jacob blessed his sons, "worshiping and leaning upon the top of his staff." The future opened upon their vision as earth was receding, and ere its earthly departure the soul seemed as an inhabitant of another world. And is it not an increased manifestation of mercy that makes the "chamber where the good man meets his fate" seem to be "quite on the verge of heaven?" May it not have been such manifestations that raised the martyr's spirit above the power of the flame, and enabled him, with Stephen, to look "up steadfastly into heaven, and" to see "the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God?" Is it not this that enables the dying Christian to exclaim, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

6. Does it seem unreasonable that when life is about to be over, the Deity should withdraw his hand, and let such a view of his glory upon the mind, that the physical frame shall fall, and the unfettered spirit rise to the full enjoyment of beatific love? Is it fanciful to suppose that this was the case with Moses? His was a peculiar death. None but his God was with him.

Behold him, in fancy, as for the last time he addresses Israel. The elders and all the people are around him, with their wives and their little ones. He sets before them the law of their God, and exhorts them to obedience. The spirit of prophecy comes upon him, and he tells them of things that should befall them in time to come, gives them his last patriarchal blessing, and then, as if taking his last look, he cries out, "Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord?"

He ascends Mount Nebo, toward the top of Pisgah. The veil has been taken from his face for the last time as he goes up to meet the Lord. Are his feelings those of dread or of joy? What should he dread? To be nearer Jehovah is his greatest joy, and he is to receive sublimer and more extensive visions of glory. Is not his prayer still, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory?" He stands upon the mountain's summit, and, as he gazes, there spreads out in all its richness and in all its beauty the promised land, even "all the land of Gilead unto Dan, and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea." He looks again, and future scenes are before him. Upon Mount Moriah rises a magnificent building—a splendid temple. Its walls are of massive structure, its columns lofty and imposing, and the riches of Ophir are displayed in its decorations. A wise king is on the throne of David, and millions of people repose in peace and prosperity beneath his sway. Within the court of the temple are the prescribed sacrifices, and devout worshipers turn toward the place of the mercy-seat. Again he prays, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory." And in the wilderness of Judea, and along the populous courts of Galilee, he beholds wandering "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." At his approach the sick and infirm crowd around. The blind see, the deaf hear, the lepers are cleansed, the dead are brought to life, and the poor hear the gospel of the kingdom. He recognizes him as the "Hope of Israel," a prophet like unto himself in mission, but as the morning star in glory. His soul exults within him as he sees fulfilled all the types and shadows of the ceremonies instituted by him, and he worships his incarnate Lord. Again he looks, and he stands by a cross; upon it is the King of the Jews. The heavens are hung with blackness, and creation sympathizes with the divine sufferer. Then the agony is over; the earth has quaked; the sun shone forth with his brilliant beams, as the triumphant exclamation was heard, "It is finished!" The graves of the dead were opened, and the veil concealing the holy of holies was rent in twain, opening up a new and living way to the mercy-seat. Again he prays, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory." And he beholds an ascended Saviour; the angel flies through the midst of heaven proclaiming the gospel to man; the Gentile hears as well as the Jew; and from the north and south, from the east and west, come flowing around the cross the people of every tongue and kindred, while glorious light is shining upon the nations of the earth, and all mankind is blessed in the "seed of Abraham." Ecstasy fills his soul, but he realizes that no man can see the face of God and live. His body falls upon the summit, and "the Lord buried him;" while his spirit, amid visions of glory on the mountain-top, ascends to brighter bliss and more refulgent glory in the celestial world.

If such were the scene which we have attempted to describe, what bliss would there not be in such a death! And may not the dying Christian, wherever he may be, even deep in the valley of humility, have bright visions and sweet whispers of love in his expiring moments? May not the manifestation of God's mercy soothe his sorrows, and turn his sufferings into joy? "May I die the death of the righteous, and may my last end be like his!"

SERMON II.

The Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.

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"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God."—2 Tim. iii, 16.

Πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος.

THE divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures we conceive to be of the utmost importance. With this doctrine the authority of the Scriptures must stand or fall. If this be given up, the Bible is of human origin and composition, and is of no more authority than other books. Indeed, it becomes a mere fabulous record whenever it deals in those high subjects which are above human comprehension. We are then still groping in the dark in regard to the great subjects of God, man, and eternity; and we have no well-grounded hope of heaven and eternal life.

The apostle declares that *all Scripture is divinely inspired;* that is, both the sentiment and the writing—and "*all*" the writings, both of the Old Testament and of the New Testament, are inspired of God. Every sentence, every thought, and every word, were originally written under the direction and inspiration of the Holy Ghost. This is what we are to understand by the inspiration of the Scriptures, both in its nature and extent.

I. In confirmation of this doctrine, we would ask attention to the following considerations and arguments.

1. And, first, we would offer a short, clear, and strong argument, from Mr. Wesley. "The Bible," says he, "must be the invention either of good men or angels, bad men or devils, or of God."

(1.) It could not be the invention of good men or angels; for they neither could nor would make a book, and tell lies all the time they were writing it, saying, "Thus saith the Lord," when it was their own invention.

(2.) It could not be the invention of bad men or devils; for they would not make a book which commands all duty, forbids all sin, and condemns their souls to hell to all eternity.

(3.) Therefore we must draw this conclusion, that the Bible must have been given by divine inspiration—that it is the work of God.

2. Our second argument is derived from *prophecy.* The ability to foretell future events, especially hundreds of years beforehand, belongs to God alone. None but he who is possessed of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, none but he who sees the end from the beginning, could have written, or caused to be written, the prophetic portions of the Holy Scriptures.

All the writers of the Old Testament were prophets. They received their words from the Lord. They also foretold what should come to pass. Moses was a prophet, and so much of a prophet that it is written, (Deut. xxxiv, 10,) "*There arose not a prophet since in Israel, whom the Lord knew face to face.*" It was customary for Christ and the apostles to apply the term "*prophets*" to all the writers of the Old Testament. Their habitual designation of the entire Scriptures was, "Moses and the prophets." Luke xxiv, 25, 27, 44; Matt. v, 17; vii, 12; xi, 13; xii, 40, &c. Hear, then, Moses, David, Isaiah, Daniel, Zechariah, and Malachi, foretelling the coming and glories of the kingdom of Christ; Jeremiah and Ezekiel declaring the overthrow of the cities of Babylon, of Nineveh, of Tyre and Sidon—all of which prophecies have been literally fulfilled; though first uttered while these cities were in prosperity, and hundreds of years before they fell.

Many of the writings of the New Testament are also prophetic. See our Saviour on the summit of the Mount of Olives with his disciples, beholding the beautiful city and the glorious temple. Hear him saying, in the language of prophecy, "*For the days shall come upon thee that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee around—and shall lay thee even with the ground*—and they shall not leave within thee one stone upon another." In less than forty years all these things were literally fulfilled. Prophetic passages are scattered through the evangelists, the Acts and the epistles. The whole book of Revelation is a prophecy of *the coming and establishment of the kingdom of God.* The apostles are called prophets. Paul says to the Ephesians, "*In the few words which I wrote afore, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is* NOW *revealed unto his holy* APOSTLES *and* PROPHETS *by his Spirit.*" From this passage it is clearly manifest that Paul is called a prophet; also that Matthew, John, Jude, Peter, and James, were *prophets,* who had received by the Spirit the mystery of Christ, and as prophets they wrote. If they were prophets they had the Spirit of the Lord, and if they had the Spirit of the Lord, they were *inspired.* We conclude, therefore, that the prophetic character of the writers, and also of the books of the New Testament, clearly makes them out to have been inspired of God, as truly so as were the writings of the Old Testament.

3. The declarations of the Scriptures themselves, plainly prove this doctrine. But will not this be proving inspiration by inspiration? It would be so indeed did we

assume the Bible in this argument to be inspired. But now we take it only as a book of truth, declaring true doctrines and true history; as such we receive it, and by itself prove its inspiration.

It is declared in 2 Pet. i, 20, 21, in reference to the Old Testament Scriptures, that "*no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation*;" that is, obtained by individual means, from human sagacity or reasoning, but it is rather obtained from God: "for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Here we have an unequivocal declaration in regard to the Old Testament Scriptures, that men wrote them as they were *moved* by the Holy Ghost. They wrote as they were *moved:* as a vessel is moved by the winds, so they were impelled by the Spirit of God; that is, the writing, the very words, were the work of God, and not of man. Thus the declaration of the text is verified, "*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.*"

If we claim this high authority for the Old Testament Scriptures, much more may we for the New Testament. The Old Testament dispensation was introductory to the gospel, and preparatory to it. It was a dispensation of types and shadows of better things to come. The grace of God was bound to the Jewish people. But, under the gospel, the promises of God and the grace of God are extended to all the world. Under the gospel, the glory of the Saviour is seen, and the power of the Spirit is exemplified in the conversion and sanctification of sinners. It is the age of contest and struggle between the powers of darkness and of light. Does the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, need to be less sharp and mighty under the gospel than under the law? If, then, the Old Testament Scriptures were inspired, much more shall we find inspiration in the New.

In Matthew x, 19, Jesus uttered to the twelve these remarkable words as he was about to send them forth to preach: "*When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak; for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.*" They are assured that the Spirit of God would speak through them, when called to stand before kings and councils. If the inspiration of the Holy Ghost was necessary to enable the apostles to answer before kings, how much more necessary was it that it should be in the written word, which must stand for ever as God's testimony to the children of men! If God inspired the words which the apostles should speak before synagogues and councils for their personal defense, how much more should they be guided by the Holy Spirit when the whole church of God was to be defended against the power and malice of Satan, his principalities, his thrones and dominions!

That the writings of the apostle Paul are inspired, and placed upon the same footing as those of the Old Testament Scriptures, appear clearly from 2 Pet. iii, 15, 16: "Even as our beloved *brother Paul* also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you; and also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, *as they do also* THE OTHER SCRIPTURES, unto their own destruction."

The apostle Peter therefore recognizes *all* the epistles of Paul as on the same footing with "*the other Scriptures*," and, consequently, as divinely inspired.

Paul also asserts the fact of his own inspiration in various passages, as 1 Cor. ii, 10, 12, 13, and Gal. i, 11, 12.

The above considerations, and Scriptural arguments, seem to us to leave no room to doubt the plenary inspiration of what the apostles wrote. Indeed the writers of the New Testament generally, like those of the Old Testament, proclaim their words by a "Thus saith the Lord."

Some writers have objected, that as Mark and Luke were not apostles, they were not inspired. But this does not seem at all probable, since these men were companions of the apostles for more than thirty years after the death of Christ. Mark was the companion of Peter, and Luke of Paul, in their journeys and trials. Their works too were composed at an early date and delivered to the churches. If they had not had a good and sufficient claim to inspiration, they never would nor could have been received by the church as canonical Scriptures. Though they were not apostles, yet they were sent out by our Lord in the number of the seventy, as all tradition testifies. Besides, were they not endowed with miraculous gifts? Would the apostles have traveled from place to place with these men as companions in order to communicate to others these miraculous gifts, and yet not confer them upon their beloved and holy companions in the work of the gospel? This cannot be supposed or believed. The early church received these writings without controversy, which could not have been the case had not their claims been valid as sacred books.

II. We pass to consider, in the second place, some objections.

Various objections have been raised against the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, a few of which it will be proper for us here to notice.

1. The first, and one which is frequently in the mouths of infidels, is that there are contradictions in the Scriptures, and therefore they cannot be inspired. A few instances we will give, together with their answers.

(1.) It is objected that Matthew and Luke have contradicted each other in relating the genealogy of our Saviour. The answer to this apparent contradiction between the two evangelists is, in brief, the following. Matthew traces the descent of Christ through the line of Joseph back to David; and Luke traces his descent through Mary, his mother, back to David. Matthew would show the Jew that Christ was son and heir of all the kings of Judah by a *legal* descent; while Luke would show the Gentiles his natural descent. Matthew shows his lineage through Joseph to Solomon; and Luke through Mary to Nathan, another son of David. Thus one of the greatest difficulties which infidelity can bring against divine inspiration disappears at once before the touch of investigation.

(2.) It is objected again that Matthew and Luke have contradicted each other in the account of the death of Judas. Matthew says that "*Judas went out and hung himself;*" and in Acts i, 18, it is said that "*falling headlong, his bowels gushed out.*" Here is no contradiction, as Dr. Clarke has plainly shown. There are two circumstances here related in the death of Judas, one of which occurred after the other. Judas hung himself; and then what could have been more natural, in the rocky and precipitous neighborhood of Jerusalem, when the traitor was cut down or fell down from his place of hanging, than that his bowels should gush out?

(3.) Again it is objected, that Matthew and Mark have contradicted each other in the account of the blind men. Matthew tells us (xx, 3) that "*two blind men were sitting by the wayside*," &c.; while Mark (x, 46) speaks of only one, Bartimeus the son of Timeus. It requires no great penetration to see that here is no contradiction. Mark mentions the fact of only one blind man, while Matthew speaks of another who was in his company. Matthew only adds to what Mark declares, but an addition is certainly no contradiction. Other examples might be adduced of this kind of objections, but the above may suffice as being among the strongest which can be brought forward.

2. Another class of objections against the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures is founded on the imperfect state of the text, its variations in the reading and punctuations. It is said if the original manuscript copies were inspired, still the present copies can have no such claim, for they have been transcribed, and are so much altered from their originals, that many thousands of variations are now pointed out and recorded between the different manuscripts. In answer to this objection,

(1.) Let it be remembered, in the first place, that it does not apply to the original copies, which were written by the hands of the prophets and the apostles. How far it applies to our copies in present use we shall see presently.

(2.) Let it be borne in mind, also, that about three-fourths of these variations are not variations in the original text, but in the punctuations and glosses which have crept into the text. The original Hebrew was without vowel points and marks of punctuation. The original Greek also was without division of chapters, verses, and words, and therefore all the variations which belong to these matters are entirely irrelevant to the question of inspiration.

(3.) Let it be further remembered, that though the Old Testament has been copied for thirty-three centuries, and the New Testament for eighteen centuries, a watchful Providence has made the most careful provision to keep them entire and inviolate. It was the business of the tribe of Levi to keep and copy the sacred books; and from very early ages every letter, every word, and every paragraph, of the sacred books was numbered, and their numbers remain the same to the present day. The Jews have always watched over their sacred books with the greatest care and keenest jealousy. Every letter was marshaled into its place, and portions of the sacred text were daily reviewed by some of the great college of scribes. It was therefore next to an impossibility that a letter should get out of its place or be lost without being detected. Further, if a manuscript was found to have a single mistake it was thrown aside as defiled, or committed to the flames, so that no false copies could come from it afterward.

(4.) We should remark again, that if in the course of ages, and in different countries, variations or additions did creep into the sacred text, they are mostly the substitution of one letter for another which is similar in form, as a *vaw* for a *yode*, which as a general thing does not alter the sense.

(5.) Again we would remark, that though there is doubt as to the purity of some words or clauses of the sacred text, yet all sound critics are united in the sentiment that the worst copy of the Scriptures that has ever been found has not vitiated one single important doctrine or precept. The great body of the text, therefore, being pure and unimpaired, the exceptions being few and far between, the doctrine of the inspiration of the sacred text is no more affected than the everlasting truths which it contains. The body of the sacred text is preserved to us, as well as the body of sacred truth; a few human and corrupted additions may have been made, but this cannot destroy the truth of God nor the sacred text. We may say to all, then, as the pious Bengel said to his pupil Reuss: "Eat the bread of the Scriptures." What though there be now and then a grain of the millstone fallen into the flour, this does not destroy the bread. Eat, then, the bread of the Scriptures, as God's own word by which we may live for ever.

3. Another objection which has been urged against plenary or verbal inspiration is founded on *the individuality of the sacred writers.* It is said that the personal peculiarities of the writers, and even their infirmities, are plainly evident in their writings: as, for example, the writings of Paul are *deep*, *abstruse*, and *argumentative*,

while the style of John is *simple*, *clear*, and *hortatory*. The style of Matthew and John is Hebraistic, and their Greek is bad and full of orientalisms, while Luke and Paul, being educated men, are far more classic and correct. This argument weighs heavily with many minds against verbal inspiration. We cannot, however, see anything so formidable in it as has been seen by others. The following is our answer:—

(1.) God speaks to man *more humano*, that is, after the manner of men; and hence he uses human language, and, of course, human language with its imperfections. If God uses human language in communicating with men, why may he not use the peculiarities of certain men, as the seraphic fire of Isaiah, the majesty of Ezekiel, the simplicity of John, or the logic of the apostle Paul, to communicate that which is peculiarly suited to each one to communicate? It is indeed no more than we should expect, that God would use the individuality of such men for the more ready reception of his truth in the minds of men.

The human mind is fond of variety, and a subject which awakens thought and emotion in one man will not always do it in another. The Bible should be a book adapted to the human mind: and such a book it is, having every variety of subject and every variety of style, calculated to arouse, to enlighten, and elevate the human mind in all its varied conditions. If then the Holy Ghost had written in one uniform style, in the purest style of Hebrew, and in the purest and most classic Greek, it would not have accomplished its object. And therefore individuality in the writers of the Scriptures inspired by the Spirit is just what we might expect.

Other objections have been raised, as that the Scriptures are hard to be understood, and if the Holy Ghost had written the book it would have been easy of comprehension. But may not the difficulty be in us? We may not have used the means best calculated to accomplish this object. Others say the translations are not inspired, and therefore the doctrine of a verbal inspiration is of no practical importance. We answer, if the translations are not inspired, yet the originals are, and we have the means of reading them as they were given to us by the Holy Ghost. Is it of no practical importance to an ambassador to a foreign court to be able to prove his commission by original documents? Of how much greater importance that the ambassador from God to a wicked world should be able to produce and read his instructions, not only the translation, but the original documents?

Thus, we think, all objections to this, as we conceive, fundamentally important doctrine of our holy religion vanish at the touch of investigation. "*This word came not of old by man, or by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*"

INFERENCES.

1. *If the Holy Scriptures are divinely inspired, human reason ought to be held in abeyance to their teachings.* There is a tendency in the natural mind to exalt human reason above the Holy Scriptures. It is the natural tendency of human pride and self-sufficiency. The distinguishing doctrine of French infidelity was that reason alone should direct mankind, and the awful results of this doctrine in the French nation is a matter of history. Human reason is weak, capable of seeing but a short way, and the great subjects of revelation are utterly above its unaided comprehension. Revelation is founded on the reason and knowledge of God, and is infinitely above that of men. Human reason, therefore, must be an humble learner in divine things, and not a teacher taking the place of God.

2. *If divinely inspired, they must teach us truth without any admixture of error.* This is a most consoling truth, and one which enhances the value of the Bible infinitely above all other books. All other books are human, and of course adulterated with human weaknesses; but this book, being divine, teaches no error, but truth alone.

3. We also infer that, *if divinely inspired, they contain a sufficiency of truth for our salvation.* The works of God are perfect. None of his works are imperfect, or fall short of their design. The design of God in giving us his law, is that our souls may be saved. "*Let my soul live,*" saith the Psalmist, "*and let thy judgments help me.*" "They are profitable for doctrine, for correction, and instruction," says the apostle, and hence their entire sufficiency for our spiritual instruction is beyond a doubt.

4. We also infer *the duty of yielding ourselves to the*

guidance of the Scriptures in all matters of faith and practice. As the Scriptures have God for their author, and their design is to instruct man in spiritual knowledge and in religious duty, there must be a sufficiency revealed for our faith and practice. This is a most important result of the doctrine of the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. Were they human compositions, or an admixture of human reasonings and sayings with divine, we could not heartily yield ourselves to them in all matters of faith and practice. But they are divine, and exactly adapted by the all-wise Mind "*to make the man of God perfect, and thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*" Let us then receive the Bible as the man of our counsel and the guide of our life, and it will assuredly lead us to a happy eternity.

SERMON III.

Nature, Condition, and Destination of Man.

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"What is man?"—Psalm viii, 4.

THE sentiment which dictated the text is admiration and astonishment, inspired by a view of the immensity of the works of creation. The contemplation of the nocturnal heavens is calculated to awaken in the mind conceptions of beauty and magnificence, of distance and magnitude, beyond any other subject. From this exterior display of the wealth and splendor of the Author of the universe, the mind is led to contemplate the glories of his being. Its own faculties shrink to insignificance when thus standing in the presence of powers, vast even beyond its ability to comprehend. But contemplating human nature exclusively in this light might lead us to a wrong estimate of its value. For though it would seem impossible it should claim the attention, much less the regards, of one so exalted as the divine Being, it is nevertheless true that it does. God condescends to visit man, even in his low estate, fallen and degraded by sin.

The question in the text is one of great practical importance, and in its examination we shall briefly notice the following particulars: man's origin, nature, condition, and destination.

I. The nations of antiquity all pretend to some traditionary account respecting the origin of the human race, though these accounts are, in many of their particulars, discordant, puerile, and irrational. Men were supposed at first either to have sprung from the earth, like plants, or from some inanimate substance, or from the lower animals; a few only, entertaining juster views of the dignity of man's nature, believed him descended from the gods.

The knowledge on this subject, possessed anciently by the Jews, and since by all Christian nations, is contained in the writings of Moses. His account is more perfect and credible than that of other ancient traditions, though in some things it agrees with them. From him we learn that the human race sprung from a single pair; that this original pair received their being, not in the way of natural descent, but from the creative power of God. This doctrine of the common origin of the human race, of identity of nature amidst all the varieties of color and form which so strikingly characterize the inhabitants of different portions of the globe, is maintained by St. Paul, who says, God "hath made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth." He hath also "determined the times before appointed" for their dispersion into the different countries they inhabit, and "fixed there the bounds of their habitations." This doctrine of one blood, of one race, so clearly the doctrine of the Bible, is not less clearly the doctrine of reason and philosophy, despite the pretended objections of infidels. All objections against the identity of the human race are founded either in ignorance or prejudice, as might be conclusively shown by a reference to facts.

The practical bearings of this doctrine are numerous and important. It has an intimate connection with the leading doctrines of the gospel, as the doctrine of inherited corruption and the atonement of Christ. If mankind universally have not the same parentage, are not descended from the same original pair whose history we have recorded in the book of Genesis, who will undertake to trace the line of their descendants after the revolutions of ages have destroyed the records of nations and families; after the operation of almost numberless causes, during a period of more than five thousand years, to amalgamate and utterly confound the different races of men? Yet it is to their descendants only that the doctrines of the fall, of depravity, and of redemption, relate. Nay, it is to them only that the gospel is to be preached; that the system of revelation refers, in its threatenings and promises, its requirements and provisions. The opinion which, on account of certain complexional differences, intellectual or physical, would destroy the identity of the human race, does thus manifestly overthrow the gospel, while, as we confess, it aims merely to disfranchise a particular portion of the race; to exclude, it may be, a single branch of the great family of man from the rights and privileges of fraternity. We repeat, the practical bearings of this doctrine are important. It teaches us to regard every man as our brother; that the American Indian, though wild and uncultivated as the savage beasts which he pursues in the chase; the African negro, in the kraal of his native land, degraded by superstition and ignorance, or transported to more favored climes, where, reduced to hopeless and heartless servitude, he toils like a beast of burden, and like one perishes, ignorant of his origin and destination; the Laplander, seeking shelter from the frozen breath of his inhospitable climate with the quadruped in his subterraneous dwelling, and, till enlightened by the labors of the Christian missionary, exhibiting few of the distinguishing attributes of human nature; in a word, it teaches that man, under all circumstances, ignorant, degraded, and miserable, though he be, has still a claim on our sympathies and benevolent regards—is to be embraced in the arms of a universal brotherhood. We are to respect his rights, to promote his happiness; in all things to regulate our conduct toward him by the divine maxim, "Whatsoever ye would that others should do unto you, do ye even so unto them, for this is the law and the prophets."

II. What is man in his nature? We read that man was created from the dust of the earth, and that the inspiration of the Almighty gave him understanding. The Scriptures uniformly represent man as a complex being; comprising in his nature that which is material and that which is spiritual. And this agrees with the general opinion of mankind, as is evinced, not only from books professedly written on the subject, and from the sentiments of the poets, but from the structure of language, from terms found in all languages distinguishing the corporeal from the mental in man, the material from the thinking principle. Still, some have maintained the doctrine of one principle only, and that man is wholly a material being. Others, after some of the ancient philosophers, contend that human nature embraces three distinct principles, and, for authority, quote the words of St. Paul, in his prayer for the Thessalonians, "And I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." But this reasoning is inconclusive, as this language is unusual with the apostle, and will readily admit of a different explanation. The repetition of terms which he here uses may only express the ardor of his mind, the deep interest he felt in the welfare of those who had been converted through his ministry; or, the terms spirit and soul may distinguish different properties only of the same substance.

What is the internal or essential nature of the soul, is a question difficult, or rather impossible, to be determined. The Bible does not decide it, and philosophy cannot reach it. The Bible merely distinguishes between the soul and body as substances exhibiting different powers and operations, but determines nothing in regard to the essential nature of either. Revelation was given to teach mankind practical truths, not metaphysical subtilties. The metaphysical ideas of modern philosophers, respecting the immateriality of the soul, were not known anciently, either to the Jews or the heathen. In their estimation all moving bodies were animated by a spirit, which, though corporeal, differed from gross matter, and was expressed by allusions to matter in its most subtil and etherealized forms.

The Bible manifestly contradicts gross materialism, which would reduce the human soul to a mere accident of matter. Such was the doctrine of the Sadducees in the time of our Lord, and such, in our own time, is the opinion of some who profess to receive their ideas from the Bible. But vain and fruitless must be every effort to establish this doctrine on the authority of the sacred writings. Materialism is the doctrine of infidelity, usually of infidelity in its broadest form—atheism. It has no sympathy with the gospel, which teaches the imperishable nature as well as infinite value of the soul. Materialism teaches that the soul is corruptible like the body, that they perish together in the grave; that immortality, the only unfailing friend of virtue, is but a fable, invented by designing men to operate upon the hopes and fears of the vulgar. It

> "Hangs out death in one eternal night!
> A night that glooms us in the noontide ray,
> And wraps our thought, at banquets, in the shroud."

But, while the Bible is opposed to gross materialism, both in its letter and spirit, it does not, as already intimated, teach the modern doctrine respecting the nature of the soul —that matter and mind, in their essential nature, are so utterly diverse as to possess nothing in common, no resembling features. Now this in fact may be all true. Some great and learned men have declared it to be as demonstrable as any mathematical proposition. This is not what we deny. We only deny that these distinctions are found in the Bible. Nor are we willing to admit that the proofs of the immortality of the soul have any necessary dependence on their truth. Yet it was in consequence of such a dependence having been alledged by Hobbes, and afterward by other infidel writers, that it was thought necessary, in order to prevent the triumphs of infidelity, to build up an imaginary breach in the impregnable bulwarks of Christianity, by alledging and maintaining these distinctions. Just as if the perpetuity of all derived existence, whether angel or insect, whatever be its internal constitution, does not depend on the will of the Creator. Had we no prospect of an existence beyond the grave but what we derive from the light reflected from such doubtful speculations, we might readily accord to them a higher character for importance than we do at present. But we have a more sure word of prophecy. I would give more for one plain declaration of the Bible on which to build my hopes of immortality, than for all the reasonings of all the philosophers, who have lived and speculated since the invention of letters. It is not philosophy, it is not the bewildered speculations of human reason, but the glorious gospel of the Son of God, which has brought life and immortality to light. This pours a divine illumination along the pathway of dying mortals and gilds the tomb. This deprives death of its sting, robs the grave of its victory, and opens to the enraptured vision of Christian faith the scenes of a blessed and undying existence.

What is man in his condition? Man's primitive condition could not have been marred by imperfections arising from external causes. He knew nothing of age and its infirmities, of disease and its revolting and heart-rending scenes—the pain, the emaciated form, and the mortal agony. He enjoyed never-failing youth and vigor; manhood in the perfection of its strength and beauty. Placed in the midst of an earthly paradise—

> "With royal honor and with glory crown'd,
> Adam, the lord of all, majestic walk'd,
> With godlike countenance sublime, and form
> Of lofty towering strength; and by his side
> Eve, fair as the morning star, with modesty
> Array'd, with virtue, grace, and perfect love:
> In holy marriage wed, and eloquent
> Of thought and comely words, to worship God
> And sing his praise, the giver of all good:
> Glad, in each other glad, and glad in hope;
> Rejoicing in their future happy race."

The physical and social happiness of our first parents was heightened by the influence of external causes; the salubrity of the atmosphere, the genial nature of the climate, and the harmony of outward objects with the constitution of the senses, rendering them an exhaustless fountain of delightful emotions. The earth,

> "Created first so lovely, so adorn'd
> With hill, and dale, and lawn, and winding vale,
> Woodland, and stream, and lake, and rolling seas,
> Green mead, and fruitful tree, and fertile grain,
> And herb and flower; so lovely, so adorn'd
> With numerous beasts of every kind, with fowl
> Of every wing and every tuneful note,
> And with all fish that in the multitude
> Of waters swam; so lovely, so adorn'd,
> So fit a dwelling place for man, that as

She rose, complete, at the creating word,
The morning stars, the sons of God, aloud
Shouted for joy; and God, beholding, saw
——well pleased."

The question is often asked, Would man, had he not fallen, have continued in his present "dwelling-place" for ever? The question, it must be confessed, is one rather of doubtful speculation than of practical utility; it is, therefore, the less to be regretted that the Scriptures are silent on the subject. Some suppose, however, that an expression of St. Paul, if attentively considered, is calculated to throw light upon this obscure question. "Behold," says he, "I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." Now it is thought, had man retained his primitive character without change, had he not fallen, when the world's probationary period had expired, he would have experienced a change analogous to that here predicted of the last generation of men, whereby he would have been fitted for entering into a state purely spiritual and unchanging. "For flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God"—that is, the kingdom which he hath prepared for his glorified saints.

It may not be impertinent here to remark, that man's first employment was agriculture, an invariable characteristic of a state of civilization. From which it is reasonable to infer, that this was his original condition, and that the barbarous and savage states, the present condition of a vast majority of our race, so far from being *natural*, are opposed to the manifest design of Providence in man's creation, and have resulted from the long-continued operation of causes both moral and physical.

What was man's original *mental* character, is a question involved in obscurity. We cannot tell how far the first pair excelled their degenerate offspring in the strength of their intellectual faculties. They received, however, from the Creator, reason, as all their other faculties, not in a state of infantile weakness, but capable of immediate and efficient exercise. And, unsullied in innocence and virtue, they must have been free from those principles of evil pertaining to fallen human nature, which operate with such energy, darkening the intellectual as well as moral vision, and retarding advancement in useful knowledge. They felt not the influence of inordinate bodily appetites, nor of prejudice and vicious habits. The slow, vegetative process, by which, at present, even the purest and brightest intellects acquire knowledge and strength, must, therefore, be very unlike the rapid and vigorous movements of mind in its primitive state. Besides, it should not be forgotten, that, prior to his first disobedience, man was permitted to hold familiar converse with the Creator. "He talked with his Maker face to face, as a man would talk with his friend." What knowledge, what elevation of the faculties, must have been the fruit of this divine intercourse! Still, we have no direct means of comparing the intellectual character of our first parents with that of their descendants.

In regard to man's original *moral* state, we may speak with greater confidence than of either his physical or intellectual. The understanding, like an incorruptible judge, was free from all influences that might prevent its right and truthful exercise; conscience, like a vigilant and trusty sentinel, was quick to discern, and faithful to report, the most distant approaches of moral evil; while the will, as a faithful executive, instantly accomplished what had been determined by the reason and moral faculty. Like innocent and virtuous children, our first parents found their greatest happiness in conforming to the will of their heavenly Father, whom they loved with supreme affection. Hence the Saviour presents for our imitation the example of little children; their simplicity and purity of intention, their unbounded confidence, their meekness and affection, and their ready and cheerful submission and obedience. And such is the character of the true Christian—of all who, through the gospel, have been made partakers of the divine nature.

Hitherto, in looking at human condition, we have considered man only as he came from the hand of his Maker, uncontaminated, and unaltered by sin. If we would contemplate man in his present condition, we must look at a different picture.

> —"Short, alas, the song that sings our bliss!
> Henceforth the history of man grows dark!
> Shade after shade of deepening gloom descends,

> And innocence laments her rules defiled.
> Who further sings must change the pleasant tune
> To heavy notes of wo."

How changed his physical condition! Instead of a life extending from age to age, full of fruition and full of hope, looking forward to an interminable duration of growing strength and enjoyment, "man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth as the flower, and is cut down; he fleeth also as the shadow, and continueth not." He is subject to toil, hardships, and privations; to disease, pain, and death. Nor has his physical condition alone experienced this direful change; his intellectual and moral natures are not less involved in the ruin of the fall. Disarrayed of their primitive glory and perfection, they have sunken into weakness and disorder, have lost their original supremacy, and, without divine assistance, necessarily fail to accomplish the great end of a rational nature. The reason is obscured and obstructed in its operations, by the influence of the passions. The moral constitution fails of its design, not only through ignorance and the stormy power of the passions, but sometimes through a hardened insensibility to duty;—as where obligation is clearly seen and acknowledged, but neither *felt* nor *regarded.* In this case, volition follows the inferior desires, a sacrilegious usurpation subverts the divine order of the soul, and "the temple of the living God is turned into a den of thieves!" That such is man's present intellectual and moral condition, is matter of individual and universal experience, and is, moreover, confirmed by all history and observation. This melancholy fact was conceded and deplored by the wiser and more considerate among the heathen. That it is not the result of the influence of early example and education, is manifest from this, that the mind often decides in opposition to both these, when enforced by every motive of truth, duty, and interest. It is therefore false to assert, that in order to secure the will, it is only necessary to enlighten the understanding. The language of the apostle, when describing the condition of the mind, first enlightened by divine truth to see itself surrounded by the horrors of guilt, without power of escape, is not the language of an individual, uttering his solitary complaint, groaning over an inward misery with which others are unable to sympathize, because without a similar experience;—it is the language of fallen *human nature*, struggling like a captive with his chains which he cannot break, and sighing for a deliverance which he sees not. Who has not felt at some period of his accountable existence—I care not under what favorable circumstances, in respect to instruction and training, his childhood has been past—who has not felt the consciousness of that inward moral condition, that worse than Egyptian bondage, that slavery of the soul to vice, which has forced upon him the humiliating confession, "The thing that I do, I allow not; I find a law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, bringing me into captivity to the law of sin and death?" Place a hearing and an understanding ear where you please among the dwellings of men, civilized or savage, Christian or heathen, and it shall become a witness to this spontaneous confession of the human heart. Man, therefore, as at present found in all countries and climates, and under every allotment of Providence, is bound by a moral condition, fearful in its nature and tendency, dependent on no outward circumstances, and from which he has no power to release himself. The language of the truly awakened heart is, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"—language betokening either flat despair, or hope looking only to the *possibility* of deliverance from some unknown power. Such, at least, must be the import of this language, when uttered by one entirely ignorant of the gospel. And O! how joyful to the self-convicted, heart-broken, and despairing sinner, must be the apostle's answer, "Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord"—that is, that through him deliverance can be obtained.

Which leads us to notice the important change in man's moral condition, through the introduction of the gospel. Without the gospel there would settle down over all his prospects of the future the darkness of absolute despair. For as the eye of imagination could scan the illimitable fields of future duration, he would behold them peopled only with the formidable ministers of divine justice, preparing for him scenes of unending and unmitigated misery;—a condition, reducing the proud lord of this lower world to the most pitiable object on the face of it, compared to whom the meanest reptile would become an object of envy, looking forward to a destiny infinitely to be desired. But, thanks to redeeming grace, this is not man's condition; he has been freed from it by "one mighty to save, and strong to deliver."

> "God was made flesh,
> And dwelt with man on earth! the Son of God,
> Only begotten and dearly beloved, between
> Man and his Father's justice interposed;
> And in their name suffer'd, obey'd, and died,
> Making his soul an offering for sin."

In consequence of this divine offering for sin, man, though still guilty and condemned, has been brought within the reach of mercy and hope; rendered capable of recovering his lost purity and innocence, and attaining to everlasting felicity. Arrayed in the righteousness of gospel faith, he may, without fear, listen to the awakened thunder of a broken law, or enter into the presence of his omnipotent Judge; because he has secured the friendship of one, who, in his stead, has fulfilled to the last tittle the demands of the law, and made it honorable.

We come now to the last particular in our discourse, namely, What is man in his destination? This question may be considered in a twofold light, having reference to man as an inhabitant of this world, and as an expectant of the next.

The knowledge and feelings of right and wrong, found in connection with the earliest developments of reason, prove man possessed of a moral nature, in the cultivation and perfection of which consists his supreme good. It has been said, with great truth, that "the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him for ever." But how is a creature, so limited in faculties and resources, to glorify God, a being infinitely exalted above all he has made, glorious in character and in external condition, whose sceptre is an everlasting sceptre, and of whose dominion there is no end? He can add nothing to the perfections of an infinite nature, to the grandeur of a boundless empire, or to a blessedness whose overflowings reach the extremities of the universe, and satisfy the desires of all the living. But, though he has not power to create an attribute or circumstance, which could invest the divine nature with a higher intrinsic glory, he has power to bring it more within the sphere of his own thoughts and affections, and to increase toward it the respect, love, and veneration of others. And in doing this, he manifestly fulfills the design of his creation. He honors the Creator, and, to the extent of his power, promotes the true happiness of his fellow-creatures. Were all inspired with similar dispositions, and to adopt similar conduct, all would be speedily restored to favor and communion with God, and brought to obey those laws on which their perfection and supreme happiness depend. So that, to know, love, and obey God, to bear his image, to be made a partaker of the divine nature, by resembling it in our moral character, is doubtless the chief end of man, whereby he glorifies God, and is prepared to enjoy him for ever. And here we perceive the connection of the gospel with man's destination. It has removed an impassable barrier, which otherwise must have for ever prevented his return and reconciliation to God. It provides for his moral renovation, without which there could be no union with God, and no moral advancement. It provides for his ceaseless and illimitable growth in holiness, and commands that, leaving the first principles of the doctrines of Christ, he go on to perfection—to this perfection of virtue, and consequently of bliss.

No one can fulfill his destination in this life who lives to himself alone. He must live chiefly for the good of others; to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, administer consolation to the sick and the suffering, and bring back the wanderer to the paths of truth, duty, and peace. This is clearly indicated by his social constitution; and in thus fulfilling the intentions of his nature, he obeys the second great command of the gospel, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." Nay, the gospel inspires a universal benevolence, breathing good-will, not only to man, but to every creature, however low in the scale of existence, capable of deriving benefit from its exercise.

The design of the present life, therefore, requires, as the great and paramount duty, this improvement of our rational nature; that we aspire to intellectual and moral excellence, and in all our intercourse with our fellow-men, and in all our treatment of the inferior creatures, that we be actuated by kind and benevolent affections.

Man's present and future destination do not at all differ in *nature.* In securing the true interests of this life, in the right use and enjoyment of its blessings, we are making the best preparation for happiness in the life to come. So, when our attention is most earnestly and exclusively directed to provide for the wants of our future being, we are not thereby neglecting our present happiness, but, in fact, are doing the very best we can to promote it. The principles of our constitution are arranged in view of the whole extent of its duration. And as duty and interest cannot conflict with one another, so at different periods they cannot conflict with themselves. In the present life there is no peace to the wicked; their mind is "like the troubled sea when it cannot rest,"—tossed and torn by the tempest of contending passions. Without holiness no man can see the Lord. Holiness is the great law of our nature, from the influence of which it is impossible to escape at any moment of our existence, however we might desire it. Hate it as we may, eschew it as we may, it has a mastery over us which it will maintain for ever, meting out to us a just retribution—

> "While life, or thought, or being lasts,
> Or immortality endures."

There is a necessary and unalterable connection between the happiness of the soul and its moral condition. In this respect, "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." As a life of virtue leads to eternal blessedness, so a life of sin leads to eternal misery, by a law of our nature. "Man," as one very justly remarks, "is happy, not in proportion to what he has, but what he is." Happiness, in this sense, is not a possession, but a condition. It consists not in riches, honors, or external circumstances of any kind. It is not to be sought without, but within. This is a universal truth, applicable to all intelligent natures; and not less to man's present, than to his future, existence. Future blessedness is but the continuation and perfection of that which commences here, depending on intellectual and moral character—on elevation of mind and purity of heart. The same simple and sublime truth is beautifully and forcibly expressed in the lines of the poet: "The mind is its own place; can make heaven of hell, or hell of heaven."

In conclusion, do you, my hearers, constantly live in view of your present and final destination? Have you reflected that to secure your well-being here and hereafter, you must conform to the will of the Creator, as made known, not only through the higher tendencies of your nature, but by his revealed word? Have you further considered, that the destinies of your being include a wider range than the brief history of the present world? Stretching away into infinity, far beyond our limited conceptions, they settle amid scenes of retribution, unalterable and enduring as the nature of the soul, and corresponding to its moral character. To fail in securing the end of your being, does not imply merely the loss of a blessing, the deprivation of a forfeited good, but positive infliction, the incurring absolute, infinite evil. Man's destination is that of a moral and accountable being, looking forward to a day of reckoning, and beyond it, to the final and everlasting issues of the judgment. If you meet and discharge your responsibilities, fulfilling the obligations of the gospel, by repentance and faith, and a life of holiness, your present being, fallen and degraded as it is, compassed about by manifold infirmities and sorrows, shall issue in a glorious state of perfection and bliss, such as in this world eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived. But, if you fail, there then awaits you beyond the grave, instead of a blessed immortality, "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, which shall come on every soul of man that doeth evil."

SERMON IV.

Death—the Wages of Sin.

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"The wages of sin is death."—Rom. vi, 23.

SIN has been defined "a voluntary transgression of the divine law;" or, in other words, "the voluntary departure of a moral agent from a known rule of rectitude or duty prescribed by God." And this answers to the pertinent and pointed definition of the evangelist John: "Sin is the transgression of the law." The law consists in requirements and prohibitions, founded upon the inalienable prerogatives of the divine character, and growing out of the immutable rights secured to the Almighty from the relations he sustains to us, as our Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor. His will, then, is the sufficient cause of the existence of these requirements and prohibitions; and the proclamation of that law by the divine authority was sufficient to render it binding, in all its parts, upon all his creatures. Hence a neglect of its requirements is no less sin than a transgression of its prohibitions. And though there may be kinds of sin, as well as degrees in sinning, the neglect of the known requirements of the gospel exhibits no less "a want of conformity to the divine will," than does the most gross and daring disregard of its prohibitions.

In the text not only sin, or want of conformity to the will of God, is spoken of; but also the *wages* of sin—as though man was hired to commit sin, and received pay for its commission. By wages, in the common acceptation of that term, we mean that which is given or received in return for services rendered; and frequently, the term, as in the present instance, is made to express the fruits or results of any specific course of conduct. Thus the apostle inquires, "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?" and immediately replies, "The end of those things is death." Man is here represented as yielding his services and receiving his pay—yielding his services to sin, and receiving death as the fruit of his toil; or yielding them unto God, and having his fruit unto holiness, and his end everlasting life. "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"

But a more comprehensive view of the whole nature and tendency of sin, than that which the inspired penman has here given, can hardly be conceived of: "The wages of sin is death." Mournfully solemn truth! Earth and hell are full of its memorials; and all time, and all eternity, shall reveal more and more of its fearful import. Yes, the "wages of sin *is* death!" and wherever its contaminations have reached, it has exerted the same baneful and deadly influence. Its character and nature have ever remained the same, bearing on its very front the fearful and alarming marks of the divine displeasure. And the destructive tendency of moral corruption is as strongly characterized, and as clearly evinced, among men, and in the present age of the world, as when it robbed rebelling angels of their high estate, or man of his primeval glory.

It is necessary, however, that we guard our inquiry; and limit it to such bounds, that the subject may not degenerate into mere impracticable speculation. We inquire, then, not *why* such consequences have been attached to sin; but our simple object is to show what its consequences really and truly *are.* Touching upon the reasons why God has thus instituted his system of moral government, we offer no hypothesis, no explanatory supposition. We deal only with the facts in the case; we enforce only the truth, that "*the wages of sin is death.*"

In attempting this, we shall contemplate it in its threefold aspect, as being the cause of *temporal*, *spiritual*, and *eternal death.*

I. We remark, then, in the first place, that sin is the cause of temporal death.

Temporal death, in its original and natural signification, implies the loss of life; or the separation of the soul from the body, and the consequent decay and dissolution of our physical nature. Physiologists have defined it to be "the irrecoverable cessation of all the functions which belong to a living animal." It may apply also to the destruction, or loss, of whatever is connected with, or essential to, the existence of that nature.

1. It is impossible to define what would have been the temporal condition of man, had he never sinned. It is supposed by some that he would have enjoyed the privilege of continued existence and happiness on earth. The tree of life, to which he would have had access, was at once a pledge of permanent being and happiness, and also a means of securing them. The fruit of this tree would, undoubtedly, have healed or averted every evil to which our physical nature might have been subject; and preserved life through the longest periods of duration, had not

our iniquities barred us from its approach, and girt it around with sleepless "cherubim and a flaming sword," as an eternal guard "to keep the way of the tree of life."

Or again, there is nothing inconsistent in the supposition, that man might have enjoyed a long life here; and after a long series of years, when the faculties of his body and mind had acquired earthly maturity—by an easy transition—he might have been transferred to a holier clime, to pass through higher scenes of bliss, in his endless progression to infinite perfection and happiness. How easy might have been the change! how glorious the transition! What unspeakable felicities would have enraptured the soul, as every successive change brought it into nearer progression to the infinite, exhaustless Fountain of goodness and love! But, when just created, when just planted in the garden, with the broad seal of immortality upon his brow, and with the clearest indications of his Creator's goodness around him; it was then that rebellion dire

> "Brought death into the world, and all our wo."

It was then that the glories of Eden faded from his vision, and a dark cloud of wo and death passed over all his prospects: for "as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

2. This existence was not only designed to be dependent, but also probationary; for no one can doubt but that man was designed, ultimately, to fill a still more exalted sphere in the scale of being, and that a brighter glory would have been revealed in his existence, had he not fallen.

Perhaps our race were designed to fill up the vacancy in the host of heaven, which had been occasioned by that disastrous rebellion that had peopled hell with angels. Can we wonder, then, that a being, a race, designed to fill up so glorious a place in the scale of existence, should first have their faith and obedience tried and tested in a probationary state? Can we wonder that such a being should be first placed in a condition in which his character should be subjected to a full and perfect ordeal?

But a probation implies a law; inasmuch as there can be no trial, no probation, without a system of discipline and government. A law also implies a prohibition and a penalty. If, then, man was designed to fill up the vacancy in heaven, occasioned by the fall of angels; and if he was placed under a law in his probationary state, can we wonder that to a violation of that law was affixed the same penalty which the fallen angels were themselves enduring? Thus it was, that when man was created and planted in the garden, which was to be the scene of his probation, the divine law was given, and the fearful penalty affixed: "Of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." It was the violation of this command, which commenced a course of sinning and disobedience, that has filled the earth with pain and wo, and brought death upon all our race. It is this that has blotted out the glories of our first Eden, and plunged our race from a sphere of exultation and glory into one of ignominy and ruin.

3. The penalty, forewarned, of the violation of the law under which man was placed, is expressed in these words: "Thou shalt surely die;" or more literally, "Dying, thou shalt die." This is a form of expression which has a peculiarly emphatic meaning; sometimes denoting the absolute certainty of the punishment denounced; and sometimes signifying not only the certainty, but also the extraordinary and gradual completion of it. Hence, the objection which has been, by some, interposed to the truth of the Scripture record upon this point—that the sentence of death was not executed immediately, or that man did not literally die on the day of his transgression—is of no force. For the divine sentence, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," or, "Dying, thou shalt die," signifies nothing more nor less, than that in that day thou shalt become incurably mortal; that thou shalt gradually but certainly die; that all thy days thou shalt be tending to dissolution and death, without the possibility of escape or remedy. And is not this literally and emphatically true? Have not all the generations of men that have preceded us been borne down and swept away by the resistless power of death? And are not our bodies, from our very infancy, tending to decay and death? How inevitable the execution of that appalling sentence, "Dying, thou shalt die!"

4. This leads us to consider another objection. It is

said that man, as originally constituted, possessed all the elements of decay and death. And that it is, therefore, absurd to regard death as the result of his violation of the will of his Maker, however impious and daring that violation might have been.

We admit, with the physiologist, that these destructive agencies had an existence even before the fall of man; they were the conservative principles held by the Almighty in his own hands, that he might bring to punishment the moral agents he had created, should they offend against his moral government. But, in reflecting upon the evils that might possibly have resulted from these agencies, had man not fallen, we are to consider two things: first, they were but slightly operative, compared with their present activity. Sin, while it has had the effect of weakening the vigor and retarding the activity of the principle of life, has had a powerful agency in bringing into fearful activity all the tendencies to decay and death.

Again, we should consider that man, in his innocency, had access to the tree of life, whose fruit would have rendered powerless, for ever, every destructive agency. Every bodily evil to which it was possible for man to be exposed in that state it would have removed, and proved, indeed, the elixir of life and immortality. But no sooner had man transgressed, than his access to the tree of life was for ever barred; and he was left a hopeless prey to the elements of death, which then, like uncaged lions, began to rage within him. With what appalling force must the awful denunciation of an offended God have fallen upon an offending race! "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

5. There is also another objection, which is worthy of a serious consideration; and that is, the alledged disproportion between the offense and the sentence pronounced by the Almighty.

We see *cause and effect* everywhere prevailing in the world; the philosopher satisfies himself with the discovery of their relation, never once dreaming that it is incumbent upon him to investigate or question the propriety of the relation. To vindicate, then, the administration of the divine government, we need only observe the fact that the eating of the forbidden fruit, and the suffering of the penalty of death, sustain to each other the relation of cause and effect, the one naturally and necessarily growing out of the other. A man, forewarned, partakes of arsenic; then he suffers death as the consequence of his stupid inattention to the warning, or the obstinacy of his unbelief. So our first parents, by one simple act of disobedience, threw off the restraining influence of the divine command, forfeited the favor of God, and brought upon themselves affliction, misery, and death. They willfully forfeited their innocence, and incurred guilt; they yielded themselves to the indulgence of their appetites contrary to their knowledge and conviction of duty; they permitted themselves to be led away by the influence and force of temptation to violate the law of God; they suffered inclination to subdue the dictates of conscience,—and the natural consequence of all this was misery and death. This was not a fortuitous or peculiar result. The consequences of sinful indulgence have been the same in all ages of the world, and of eternity. It dethroned angels of light ere ever the world was; and, since man has fallen, it has been ever working the same results among a sinning race. Not so obvious, indeed, among those already tainted and polluted, for their brightness is already half obscured; but tending, with unerring certainty, to the same final result.

Let us not, however, be understood as palliating the actual guilt and enormity of the primeval transgression. From the intimate and glorious connections that, up to the period of their apostasy, had existed between our first parents and their Creator; from the distinct and awful manner in which God, with his own lips, had warned them of their danger and of the consequences of disobedience; from the clear light which their own unclouded minds reflected upon every truth and every duty; from the inconceivably beautiful images of purity and goodness with which the primeval earth was decked; and from the awful consequences that should inhere to an unborn and unnumbered posterity,—the crime of our first parents assumes an enormity and a magnitude, to which earth, with all its unmitigated and increasing wickedness, has not since been able to find a parallel. I know there are crimes that seem to bear a stamp of deeper malignity and heaven-daring,—

crimes that would indicate the utter extinction of every pure and holy feeling, of every noble and virtuous sentiment; but they are the paroxysms of natures already disjointed and ruined; of minds upon which the light of heavenly truth has long cast only a feeble and sickly radiance; of souls that had, from long contact with evil, almost lost the very apprehension of virtue. The sin of such, only spreads another shade of darkness over the already sullied and clouded soul; but the sin of our first parents not only extinguished the before undimmed light of heaven in their own souls, but stripped the very earth of its light and loveliness, and transmitted to every soul of man moral pestilence and death. As their sin was of a higher character, so its consequences were of a more fearful magnitude and extent.

How wide and universal is that dominion which death has established over our earth! The dark insignia of his power are everywhere seen; and wherever living man peoples the earth, there are to be found the monuments of his triumphs and victories. No individual can stay his progress or elude his search. From the midst of the populous city and from the lonely glen, from the abode of luxury and from the hovel of penniless poverty, from the bustling scenes of crowded life and from the lounging ranks of ease and idleness, it calls forth its victims to their appointed doom. No one may hope to escape. From the cradle to the grave, the monster follows our footsteps with stealthy, but steady strides; so that literally, "dying, we die."

II. In the second place, we proceed to show that sin is the cause of spiritual death.

By spiritual death, we understand not an utter extinction of our spiritual being, for spirit cannot cease to exist; but the alienation of the heart from God, and its consequent destitution of divine or spiritual life. The term, death, as applied to the soul, is used in a figurative or metaphorical, and not in a literal, sense. But the parallelism between them is striking and impressive.

1. As in the case of natural death all the functions of the body become totally inoperative and useless; and the body, though its elements are not annihilated, suffers corruption and ruin; so, in spiritual death, the functions of the spiritual nature become utterly inadequate to accom-

plish the objects of their creation; and though the spirit still exists, it exists in corruption and in ruin. So far as it concerns every holy thought, affection, and work, the soul in this state is totally and irrecoverably dead. This is what is termed being "dead in trespasses and sins."

Sad as it is to see the noble frame of man reduced to corruption and death by sin—God's handy-workmanship marred by iniquity; sad as it may be to contemplate the wretchedness and bodily suffering with which sin has filled our earth, and the disorder and desolation it has produced in every state of society and among all people; this is not the extent, not the depth of the ruin it has wrought. It is in man's spiritual nature that sin has done its direst, foulest work. The moral purity of this inner sanctuary of our being has been defiled, its glory has been tarnished and obscured, its godlike aspirations have been trampled in the dust, and its immortal hopes have been blighted and withered.

2. As natural death breaks off its victim from his connection with the living; so spiritual death severed the soul from the intimate and glorious relationship it sustained, in its purity, to the grand fountain of spiritual life.

Man, in his primeval state of holiness, was permitted to enjoy free and familiar intercourse with his Creator, whose presence filled his soul with rapturous joy, and in whose converse was his chief delight. He also possessed the peculiar favor of his God, as a being designed to mirror forth his glory, and exhibit the highest specimen of creative skill. Like the lovely masterpiece of the divine Architect, man came from the hand of his Maker; but sin has marred its beauty, and despoiled it of its loveliness. As the soul is the life of the body, so God is the life of the soul; and when he withdraws, spiritual death ensues. In this sense, the curse was fulfilled upon Adam at the very moment of his transgression. That moment he became spiritually dead. He now dreaded the presence of his Maker, and sought to hide himself; and when compelled to appear before him, it was as a self-condemned criminal, trembling in the presence of an awful judge, from whom he had no right to hope, or reason to expect mercy.

3. This spiritual death has extended its influence through our whole nature. It has affected not only the

moral feelings, but also the understanding. The vigor, the elasticity, and the comprehension of the intellect; in fine, all its powers have become paralized, so that *knowledge*, as well as bread, can be acquired only by the "sweat of the face." The affections, the heart has also fallen under the influence of this fearful lapse. How high, how transcendently glorious, was the object of man's earliest and holiest affections! But, when he had fallen, how fitly is he described as "changing the truth of God into a lie, and worshiping and serving the creature more than the Creator!" Affections withdrawn from God, now centred in himself; and envy, and malice, and all-absorbing selfishness, sprung up as the legitimate offspring of perverted affections. The heart, just now so pure, so holy, so elevated in its aims, how has it fallen! "How has the gold become dim, and the most fine gold changed!"

Conscience and reason have also suffered in this universal wreck of our spiritual nature. And as if sin would leave no sentiment, no principle, no power of our nature, uncontaminated, it has invaded the sanctuary of its freedom and enslaved the will, so that every power and susceptibility of our nature has become the servant and minister of sin. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint." "*Every* imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." "The carnal mind is enmity against God;" it has abjured reason, conscience, and religion, and become the slave of passion and base desire. How often is it seen, in the dark catalogue of man's follies, that he *wills*—sternly and daringly wills—against all that is just, and pure, and virtuous, and good; and in favor of all that is base, and dark, and ruinous as perdition itself! How often is it that the *will*—the inexorable *will*—stands firm as the granite bulwark against all the pleading remonstrances of conscience; against all the sublime and touching sympathies that pour themselves forth from the garden of Gethsemane, the hall of Pilate, and the cross of Calvary; against all the terrors that are thundered from the lofty peaks of Sinai, from the majesty of eternal justice, and from the sinner's final doom! Why, against all this, does the heart remain unmoved, and the will unsubdued, but that this spiritual death has spread through all our nature, chilling every emotion, and corrupting every faculty?

4. This spiritual death extends to, and reigns over, all men, until they are renewed by the grace of life.

The whole history of man, in every age, in every nation, so far as we have any knowledge, is but a standing and everlasting demonstration that both Jews and Gentiles are all included under sin; that, naturally, "there is none righteous, no, not one,"—"there is none that understandeth, none that seeketh after God." "They are all gone out of the way,"—"there is no fear of God before their eyes; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace have they not known." Amid the overspreading influence of this spiritual death, wickedness has acquired rank and fearful growth, and earth itself has grown old in crime. From this deep fountain of wickedness in man's spiritual nature, what floods of iniquity have been poured out to blacken the fair face of creation, and cover the entire history of a sinning race with shades of moral turpitude appalling to the virtuous contemplation!

And even the church of the living God, purchased and renewed by the blood of atonement, how has her light been dimmed, and her energies paralized, by the lethargic influence of this spiritual malady. And never can she stand forth in all her comeliness and beauty—"the light of the world"—till, through faith, she has obtained triumphant victory over sin, and inscribed, HOLINESS TO THE LORD, upon all her banners. How have the great enterprises of Christianity flagged beneath the waning zeal and activity of the church! O, would she but rend asunder the grave-clothes of her worldly-mindedness, and put on her garments of Heaven's own weaving; how soon would the life's blood of the soul begin to course her veins with unwonted freedom! how soon would she come up from the wilderness leaning on her Beloved! The breezes of heaven would fill her temples; and the dry bones, now scattered abroad, bleaching on all her plains, would rise to spiritual life; and an accumulated flood of glory would roll onward till our desert world should bud and blossom as the rose.

III. But let us approach the third and last topic of our discourse, and contemplate the wages of sin in their final and eternal results.

I approach this subject, my brethren, with the profoundest solemnity and awe. It is no subject on which to trifle, or use vain words; for if there be one subject on which we should deal with our fellow-beings with more scrupulous sincerity than another, it is that which affects their eternal hopes and condition. God forbid, that I, as a minister of his word, should withhold aught of his truth, or fail to declare the whole counsel of God; and while I am thus called to deal out the terrors of the Lord, I would do it with all plainness and godly sincerity.

1. Need I apologize, my brethren, for dwelling upon this solemn, momentous theme? And yet, I am perfectly aware that the proclamation of the fearful denunciations of God does not suit the fastidious tastes of even many professing Christians. Say they, "Tell us of salvation, bring to us the messages of mercy, speak to us of the love of God—of the compassionate, bleeding Lamb, tell us of heaven, of its blessedness and glory; but tell us not of the wrath of God, speak to us not of his anger, bring not before us the horrors of an endless hell." My brethren, how inconsistent is this fastidiousness! What is the proclamation of heaven to the pure in heart, but the proclamation of hell to the impure, and to all workers of iniquity? But, has God declared a truth, and shall man presume to hide it from his perishing fellow-men, lest he should wound the false delicacy of the formalist, or shock the sensibility of the impenitent and godless? Nay, sinner, the very love we bear to your souls, as well as our duty to our divine Master, requires us to declare the whole counsel of God. Even affection, love for the sinner, would constrain the minister of God to deal plainly with his soul. If a man is in the first stages of a lingering and fatal disease, what would you say of the wisdom, or prudence, or justice, even, of the physician who should withhold from him a knowledge of his situation, if that knowledge were essential to his cure? Would a man in his senses ask for such medical treatment? Rather, would he not claim it as his right, to be made acquainted with the real nature and danger of his case? And would not the physician be faithless in his duty, who should withhold knowledge of such imminent importance from him? If, then, we would not be trifled with in the disease that can only destroy the body, how can we ask to be trifled with in that spiritual malady which *will destroy both soul and body in hell!*

2. The death of which we have here spoken, is unquestionably the special and peculiar fruit or wages of sin to which the apostle referred in our text. For the death spoken of is placed in contrast with "eternal life;" and what, I beseech you, but eternal death can be the opposite of eternal life? I am aware that some tell us that such a death has no existence, except in the brain of the theologian. But you must know, as well as myself, that the future state of the wicked is often represented as being different from that of the righteous—nay, the one is often placed in contrast with the other, and the same terms used to express the duration of each. If, then, the use of these terms, in the one case, affords any ground of hope that the joys of heaven will be of eternal duration; in the other, they afford deep and awful reason to fear that the woes of hell will be alike interminable and unceasing. You may as well tell me there is no heaven, as that there is no hell; or that the angels and God himself are but the creatures of poetic fancy, as that Satan and fiends of darkness have no essential existence. Does the Bible speak of the one, so it does of the other. Does it portray the unspeakable bliss of the saints in glory, it also speaks of the unutterable woes of the damned in hell—the horrors of the "second death."

3. But what is this *second death?* what language can describe it? What lofty conception can comprehend it in all its fullness? The mariner, with his plummet, can fathom the depth of the sea—the navigator can measure its expanse—but what line or plummet can fathom the bottomless ocean of eternal perdition? what navigator can take the aggregate of its wo? Inspiration only can give utterance to the fullness of this eternal death. It is an eternal banishment of both soul and body from the presence of God, and from the glory of his power—an eternal separation from the favor and enjoyment of God. And, if God be withdrawn from the soul, what is left to it but the "blackness of darkness for ever?" It is not an extinction of *being*, but of happiness and hope—the destruction of both body and soul in hell. It is being cast into hell, where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched. It is being cast, *with all his members*, into hell; it is going into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. To the wicked the day of judgment is a day of wrath; for then

shall the Lord Jesus be revealed from heaven with the mighty angels; in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them which know not God, and that obey not the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day nor night.

Such are the fearful and final wages of sin. Sad as is the picture of wo it exhibits, it is what the finally impenitent shall really suffer. Say not that the picture is colored and fancy-wrought; for the pencil that drew, and the fancy that wrought it, were those of inspiration. And if these are only the plain, solemn, and truthful announcements of the righteous retributions of offended Heaven, how ought the impenitent to take alarm, and escape from impending death!

4. Is it not the fear and apprehension of this death that clothes the hour of dissolution with such dread—that arms the "king of terrors" with such a fearful "sting?" How universal is the fear and dread of death! By how many mortals would a life of poverty, and toil, and bodily suffering, be gladly chosen, rather than to endure what is dreaded and feared in death!

> "The weariest and most loathed worldly life,
> That age, ache, penury, and imprisonment, can lay on man,
> Is paradise to what we fear of death."

But repulsive as may be the wasting pain, the gasping agony, the utter dissolution and rottenness of the grave; hard as it may seem to be cut off from the society of those we love—to open our eyes upon the light of heaven no more—to be incarcerated in that gloomy cell, which is penetrated by the beams of no sun, and cheered by the murmurs of no sound; sorrowful as may be the unavailing grief of bereaved friends, the heart-rending wail of those bound to us by ties that death only could sever—it is not the anguish of friends, the gloom of the grave, nor the agony of dying, that makes us dread death, and shudder at its approach. Whence, then, this shrinking from its cold embrace? Why this fear and alarm at its approach?—

> "But that the dread of something after death,
> That undiscover'd country, from whose bourne
> No traveler returns, puzzles the will!"

Why is it, but that the truth of God is foreshadowed by the appalling apprehensions of a guilty conscience? Why is it, but that conscience already apprehends the agony of the undying worm and the unquenchable fire? And if the premonition, the mere foreshadowing of this eternal death, be thus appalling, what must it be, when the sinner shall experience it, in all its fullness!

5. Permit me to pause with emphasis upon this subject—O, that I could impart to it that solemn emphasis, which its importance demands!—that I may present it with more distinctness and force to the impenitent before me.

Say not, sinner, let me earnestly and solemnly entreat you—say not that this ruin shall not come nigh thee; for it may be that even now thou art standing upon the very verge of everlasting wo. The merest thread of being separates between thee and the realization of all the horrors of the second death. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked." Thou mayest hide thy sins and cloak thy follies from the sight and observation of man; but thy God is not deceived, and fearfully shall he call thee to account; nay, thy own conscience accuseth thee and bodes thy fearful doom. It raises its voice with solemn admonition and warning, and points thee to the solemn hour of Heaven's avenging retribution. And, if it thus reprove thee, notwithstanding all the influence of worldly interests, prejudices, and passions; how will it torment thee, when all these have died away! If the recollection of thy sin, thy dereliction of duty to thy God and to thy own soul, be thus poignant *here*, what will it be *hereafter!* If *impending* ruin fill thee with dismay, and blanch thy cheek to deathly paleness, what horror shall attend *ruin realized!* Though thou mayest stifle the voice of conscience here, and in folly forget thy sin, yet, presume not that it will be thus with thee hereafter. Thy soul shall be all uncovered to its sting; and shall stand unhoused, amidst that storm of divine wrath, which the Almighty shall rain upon the wicked. Memory shall never forget; conscience shall never die, and through the long, long ages of eternity, shall it continue to hold ever before thee the mirror of thy follies and thy sins. Clearly, as if reflected in the sunbeams of eternal light, shall it upbraid thee for thy disobedience to thy God; thy want of care for thy soul; and the burden of thy lamentation shall be, that with thine own hand thou hast plucked down this fearful ruin upon thee; that upon thyself thou hast barred and bolted the massy gates of hell's enduring dungeon; that thou hast pointed the spear and aimed the shaft that now pierces thy soul with unending anguish. And to fill up to its very brim the cup of thy bitterness, to complete thy loathings of self, to give higher zest to the gnawings of the undying worm, thou shalt ever remember—the appalling truth shall be written in burning capitals upon the very walls of thy prison-house—that thou hast done all this "in spite of the Godhead slain," and while bleeding mercy wept over thee, and a compassionate Redeemer besought thy return to God.

But I must now close. I have endeavored to probe this moral disease, and trace it out into its final results. And now, it only remains for me to hold up the grand restorative; to proclaim that "*there is a balm in Gilead, and a physician there;*" that though "the wages of sin is death," "the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

And while I turn to this glorious truth, new light from the highest heaven seems to break upon my mind. Here do I learn that the sinner may be pardoned and redeemed; the unholy be sanctified and saved; that death may be deprived of its sting, and hell disappointed of its prey. Here do I learn that though sin may rage, and death devour, the grace of God can give victory and triumph. Wide as they may have spread their ravages, so wide is the abounding grace and mercy of God; mighty as may be the dominion they have so long usurped, still more mighty and glorious is the dominion and power displayed in the person of Jesus Christ. O, the triumph and glory of the cross! There is in it an omnipotence, to break off the chains and thraldom of Satan, and exalt the soul to the knowledge and glory of salvation.

"Break off your tears, ye saints, and tell
  How high your great Deliv'rer reigns;
Sing how he spoil'd the hosts of hell,
  And led the monster death in chains!

Say, 'Live for ever, wondrous King!
  Born to redeem, and strong to save!'
Then ask the monster, 'Where's thy sting?'
  And 'Where's thy victory, boasting grave?'"

But what madness can prompt the sinner to the rejection of this priceless gift; the only balm that can cure his spiritual malady; the only agency that can deliver from the power and dominion of sin and death? Is it a slight thing that the soul, endowed with powers and capacities which ally it to angels and to heaven, the soul that shall never cease to be and to suffer, shall perish in eternal night? O, "*it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!*" "*Be not deceived; God is not mocked. Whatsoever*"—yes, "WHATSOEVER *a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*" Life is the spring-time of our being; we go forth sowing seed; eternity is the season when the harvest shall be reaped, the fruit gathered in. The fruit of sin is eternal death.

I pray God to deliver us from the pollution and the practice of sin, that we may not gather this fearful harvest unto our souls, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SERMON V.

Salvation—Mysterious and Glorious.

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"Which things the angels desire to look into."—1 Pet. i, 12.

THE natural inquiry, What are the things into which angels desire to look, or, as the original implies, upon which they intently gaze, is readily answered by the context. They are "the salvation of souls," "the sufferings of Christ," "the preaching of the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." These are the "things" which engage the attention of the first-born sons of light; these the "things" which constitute the subject of angelic study. Hence results the doctrine:—

Salvation, procured by the sufferings of Christ, and rendered effectual by the preaching of the gospel, is a subject profoundly mysterious and infinitely glorious.

Infinitely glorious,—else had their attention been absorbed by some other subject in the boundless empire of the great Supreme; profoundly mysterious, or they "who excel in strength" had long since fathomed it, and turned their attention elsewhere.

I. Mysterious, and therefore a subject of angelic study.

First, *from its novelty.* "The thing that hath been," says the wise man, "it is that which shall be"—a truth which holds among the inhabitants of heaven, as well as among the dwellers upon earth. From *them*, equally as from us, God has hidden the future. To HIM only is known what a day will bring forth; and they, like ourselves, are enabled to infer the probability of what will be, from a knowledge of what is, and what has been. For the salvation of sinners by the sufferings of Christ, there was no prototype. It was an event totally unique in the annals of eternity; and the anthem John heard in heaven, the burden of which was, "Glory unto the Lamb," is called there the *new* song.

Not only so. It was in direct contradiction to their experience. There had been sin in heaven before its blighting influence blasted God's earthly paradise. Angels, under their leader Michael, had fought against their compeers who kept not their first estate; had seen them thrust down to the place prepared for them; and knew that they were there reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day. For *them* no Saviour was provided; no *gospel* ever echoed through the dreary caverns of the damned, and the smoke of their torment was ascending, in increasing blackness, when an embassy of these angelic students was commissioned to announce to our world the strangely mysterious truth, that, by the sufferings of Christ, sinners might be pardoned, sanctified, glorified. Again,

2. *The moral character of the race to be redeemed heightens this mystery.*

Were rebel angels greater sinners than fallen men? Of course, we presume not to answer that question; but we may ask, and to some extent answer the inquiry:—

What had been the moral history of our world when the Redeemer's advent was announced to the wondering shepherds of Judea? What a spectacle had it presented to the gaze of those who shouted for joy when God laid its corner-stone, as one generation succeeded another, until the fullness of time had come? They saw the first man, created (and it is not said *they* were thus created) in the likeness and image of his Maker, basely yield to temptation, and coolly attempt to palliate his guilt, and to justify his conduct. They heard the dying groan of righteous Abel, as death first entered into the dominions of Jehovah; death by violence, death by a brother's hand. Thence onward, age after age, in every part of the earth, they saw man in arms against his fellow; carnage his delight, the shedding of a brother's blood his glory; unto such an extent, that the history of our world is little else than a chronicle of wars, and a record of the slain. And what was man's conduct toward his Maker? How did it appear to those who worship Him with a pure and unceasing devotion? God had revealed himself to his earth-born creature, had made known his will, and stooped to ask the homage of his heart. Behold man as angels saw him, "disliking to retain God in his knowledge," bowing down to idols made by his own hands, worshiping the planets, deifying some monster of wickedness, and adoring the reptiles that crawl beneath his feet. That black cloud, which has been rising for centuries from earth to heaven, darkening the very throne of Jehovah; what is it? It is the incense offered by the children of men to their great Creator, their unwearied benefactor; the incense of oaths, and cursings, and blasphemies. How did these things appear in the eyes of the celestial host; and how, upon their ears, did such sounds vibrate? Lo! these are the subjects of this salvation! But its mystery is seen still further,

3. *In the manner of its accomplishment.*

By the sufferings of Christ! Instinctively our minds revert to the manger of Bethlehem, the garden of Gethsemane, the cross on Calvary. We behold the man, the man of sorrows, homeless, friendless, for he had not where to lay his head, and in his trying hour all forsook him. We remember his piercing cry:—"My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death;" his prayer for the removal of "this cup;" and the strange mystery revealed in that verse of Luke's Gospel, where it is written: "There appeared an angel from heaven,"—one of those who desire to look into these things,—"strengthening him." The sufferings of Christ! We revert to his temptation in the wilderness, to his fastings, and his midnight prayers; his buffetings and scourgings; his lacerated and bleeding body; his crown of thorns, the nails, the soldier's spear, his dying exclamation, "It is finished!" What then? We have reached merely the confines, the outer boundaries of the meaning of that language—the sufferings of Christ. Egregious, therefore, is the folly, to call it by no harsher name, when man, who, in his present state, sees only through a glass darkly, professes to explain this mystery; undertakes to gauge the depth of those sufferings; and ventures to discuss the question:—How could He, who ever liveth—die; and how could the fountain of all happiness—suffer? It is the finite measuring the infinite,—the creature analyzing the Creator. It is one of the ten thousand illustrations of that verse of the poet, which, from its universality, has passed into a proverb:

> "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread!"

Thus, as happens to the eye of him who seeks to measure spots upon the surface of the sun shining at noonday, the understanding is darkened; and faith, by which only can He who is invisible be seen, becomes weak. Even of the men who have been commissioned by the Holy Ghost to take the oversight of the flock, there are those, who affect to doubt the propriety of Paul's language when he charges them to "feed the church of GOD which he hath purchased with *his own blood*." Others give the passage a fanciful and far-fetched interpretation; and yet others exult at having found, in some Arianized version, a different reading. Thus the ransom price of a world is undervalued, and at length, having at first been wounded in the house of his friends, the Redeemer is, by his enemies, stripped of his divinity, and put to an open shame. What we *now* know, and our knowledge rests not upon any isolated passage of Scripture, amounts to this:—the salvation of our race was effected by the sufferings of Christ, and Christ is the Creator and upholder of all things, the

Lord God omnipotent. *Hereafter*, if our faith fail not, we shall "look into these things," with those who now surround that throne, in the midst of which they behold "a Lamb, as it had been slain;" and the same Lamb shall instruct us, and "lead us to living fountains of waters."

4. *The mode of its promulgation heightens the mystery of this salvation.*

It pleases God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe; and,—how can they hear without a preacher? Angels were sent to announce His advent, and to proclaim the glad tidings of great joy to all the people; they attended on him during his ministry, and witnessed his sufferings, his agony and death. But the work being accomplished, and the Redeemer having declared upon the cross, "It is finished," there remained nothing more for them to do, than to rejoice over the repenting sinner; and to minister unto those thus constituted heirs of salvation. To the fallen race itself was the great commission given; and *men* are constituted ambassadors for Christ. In the selection of these heralds too, as it has been from the beginning, and ever shall be, the great Head of the church displays his mysterious sovereignty. Pertinent to angels, and unanswerable is, in this respect, the inquiry, "Who hath known the mind of the Lord; or who hath been his counselor?" Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty. Passing by the educated, the scribe, the philosopher, he selects and sends forth, in many instances, those whom finite creatures deem the most unlikely; and, as it was when he of Tarsus first "preached the faith which once he destroyed," oft repeated is the question, expressive of astonishment, "Is Saul among the prophets?"

But more than this. The immediate context refers to the manner in which the gospel is preached as one of the things into which angels desire to look. It is "with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." Nothing else is "preaching." There may be a well-written sermon; it may be strictly orthodox, abounding in Scriptural quotations, and, according to the nicest rules of the art, oratorically delivered. Those who hear, may admire in mute astonishment; and this admiration may reflect upon the speaker a very grateful self-complacency. He may deem himself an Apollos,—a son of consolation, or a son of thunder, as the case may be, and his hearers may indorse the opinion. But if God be not with him in the pulpit, if the Spirit touch not his lips with fire, if he speak not with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven—*he does not preach.* There is nothing in his performance calculated to convert the sinner, or to save the soul; nothing there into which angels desire to look beyond what they might find in the manly declamations of the senate, or the dainty eloquence of the stage. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts;" and while the sufferings of Christ are the grand mystery of heaven, and the only means of procuring salvation, equally essential, if not equally mysterious, is the presence of the Holy Ghost in every sermon by which those sufferings are rendered effectual. This leads me to notice another, and, perhaps, to angels, a still greater mystery in this subject of their study. I mean,

5. *The manner in which the tidings of this salvation, even when preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, are received by the children of men.*

(1.) By some, readily and with eagerness. Their spirits drink in the balmy sound on its first announcement. In the language of Job: "God maketh their hearts soft." With the trembling jailer they ask, "What must I do to be saved?"—and do it. With them—and instances have been witnessed among the most abandoned, as well as among those whom the world calls moral—conviction is as the flash preceding the report which echoes through the vaulted domes of the celestial city, that another is added to the heavenly family; the prelude to the swelling anthem, by which those who stand in the presence of God manifest greater joy than is called forth by the upright conduct of ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance.

(2.) Others, in the startling language of the first martyr, "do always resist the Holy Ghost." Not once, or twice, but *always;* and, to heighten this mystery, let me add, their resistance is effectual. In this sense, the insect man is more than an equal in the contest with the God who made him. Strange mystery! We have no right to suppose, nay, we cannot conceive it possible, that angels have this power; but that man has it, is equally the teaching of the Scriptures and the dictate of experience. In childhood, in youth, in manhood, in old age; busied with the anxious cares of life, or in pursuit of the bubble reputation; in health and in sickness; yea, upon the panting bed of death, and even down to the moment when the quivering spirit wings her flight to the judgment-seat of Christ, man has the power to resist the Holy Ghost; and —*does* resist him.

(3.) Yet others, and among them the great majority of those who are in the habit of attending upon the public worship of God, *partially* yield to the strivings of the Spirit. They lay down *some* of the weapons of their rebellion. They would give him their hearts, if it were possible, piecemeal. When they say to the Holy Ghost, "Go thy way," they are careful to add, "for this time." They have no intention of so fighting against him as to induce his final flight. They halt and hesitate. They weep over their sins to-day; and to-morrow they will repent and give their hearts to God. In heaven's register are their ten thousand vows of amendment and reformation recorded, and against each is written—broken. For years, ministering spirits have been about thy path, sinner, wondering at the unwearied efforts of Him who standeth at the door and knocks; still are they waiting for the signal which shall warrant the tuning of celestial harps for joy at thy repentance. How this conduct appears to thyself I know not. To them who view it by the same light in which God sees it, beyond a doubt it is wondrously strange,—unfathomably mysterious.

II. But this subject of angelic study is INFINITELY GLORIOUS. The fact declared in the text is ample proof of this position. Into the wonders of nature, the mysteries of Providence, the revolution of the planets, the creation of new, or the destruction of old worlds, it is not said they desire to look. Possibly all these things engage a share of their attention; for, like ourselves, they are finite, and grow in wisdom and increase in knowledge. But in the sufferings of Christ and man's salvation; in the plan of human redemption, devised by infinite wisdom and executed by infinite love, they find a subject of study infinitely glorious.

First, *in its exhibition of the divine character.* It recalls, and continually shows forth, an attribute of the great Supreme, with which the universe had been otherwise unacquainted. Their own existence attests his *goodness;* and every successive moment of unalloyed and increasing bliss heightens that grateful feeling, which prompts the exclamation, O taste and see that the Lord is good! They knew his *power* also. They were with him when he stretched the north over the empty place, and hung the earth upon nothing. They heard that voice which said, "Let there be light; and there was light; and they shouted for joy when the morning stars first sang together, and the Creator's last day's work was done." They knew him also as a God of *justice*, taking vengeance upon the guilty. They had seen their associates, who had revolted from their allegiance, hurled headlong into hell; and the smoke of their torment excites, amid the celestial ranks, the exclamation, "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?" But never, until the fulfillment of the declaration, "Lo, I come to do thy will!" never, until the claims of a broken law were satisfied, and Christ had drained the dregs of the bitter cup, and ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, knew they the mercy of Him who hateth iniquity, and who cannot look on sin. Here they see his compassion, and his readiness to forgive. Here is found an answer to the otherwise eternally unsolved problem, "How can God be just, and justify the ungodly?" It is an infinitely glorious study therefore, because in it is seen, and will be seen for ever, the fulfillment of the prophet's declaration, "Mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

2. *The transforming efficacy of the plan of redemption indicates its glory.* It is a glorious study to trace its effects upon nations; and well may angels desire to look into the progress of a people from savage barbarism to civilized refinement; from lust, and rapine, and blood, to a pure and spiritual devotion; and to the triumphing and the abounding everywhere of the fruits of the Spirit. Utterly vain have been attempts to civilize, independently of the preaching of salvation by the sufferings of Christ. Send them the gospel first; and then, when the prophet's ques-

tion, "Hath a nation changed their gods?" is answered in the affirmative, the blessings of civilization and refinement follow in her train. An *uncivilized* Christian nation is an unheard-of anomaly; and in the progress of God's scheme for saving our world, angels see, as man might see, did he not shut his eyes, that the time is coming when this earth shall be filled with the glory of God; and that every trophy of the sufferings of Christ, every sinner saved by the preaching of the gospel, is at once a seal attesting the truth of the prediction, and an agent to bring about its fulfillment. In the individual convert himself is seen the wondrous transforming efficacy of the plan of salvation. The tiger is changed into the lamb; the blood-thirsty persecutor into the apostolic martyr; a child of wrath, an heir of hell, becomes a son of God; a fellow-citizen of the saints, an equal with angels, (Luke xx, 36,) a co-heir with Christ himself. This leads to the remark that,

3. *Its diffusive nature renders God's method of saving sinners a suitable subject for angelic study.* Once *they* were sent on an embassy to announce his birth, and to make the first proclamation of Heaven's good-will to man. Even yet, as they shall continue to be, until commissioned to reap and gather in the harvest, are they ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation. But they have no agency in diffusing the blessings of the gospel. It is left to itself. Man, redeemed and regenerated, is to tell the story. It is itself the leaven that is to leaven the whole lump. True, as before remarked, independently of the Holy Spirit's aid, even the preaching of the gospel is a vain thing, and without him, learning and eloquence can do nothing; yet is it equally true, that every disciple who pleases may have that Spirit's influence; and the first prompting of every converted sinner's heart is to glorify God, by proclaiming how great things he hath done; and by inviting others to participate in the same blessedness. Under a great mistake, indeed, are multitudes of professing Christians, when they imagine their own individual happiness was the first or chief object of the Almighty in their conversion. That they might be happy! Were that all, he might at once, and he would, have translated them away from this region of temptation and trial, to that rest which remaineth for

the people of God. No; his first great object was the advancement of his own glory, by adding another to the army by whom a world is to be brought into allegiance to its Maker and its Saviour. That this is true, is seen in the fact that Christians are happy here just in proportion as they continue to seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Let them, as is, alas! the case with too many, let them wrap themselves in selfishness, and sit down, exclaiming, I have passed from death unto life, and now I'll be happy; and soon will the light that is in them become darkness. Not into the history or the conduct of such professors do angels desire to look; but into the results of that glorious copartnership, into which the Almighty, passing by the first-born sons of light, has taken the converted sinner, and enabled him, with all his redeemed brethren of the race, to exclaim, "We are laborers together with God!"

4. *The glory of this study is seen further in the freeness with which the blessings of this salvation are offered to the children of men.*

(1.) To all indiscriminately. It stops not to inquire into the degree of the sinner's guilt, or the extent of his iniquity. As the Saviour, when on earth he healed the lepers, unstopped the ears of the deaf, and on the sightless eyeball poured the day, asked no questions as to the virulence or the duration of the malady; so, salvation by the sufferings of Christ is offered not only to the moralist, and the good citizen, but to the profligate and the abandoned; to every wretched outcast on this side of the caverns of damnation. And this

(2.) In perfect sincerity. O what a diminution of its glory, if the doctrine had ever reached heaven, and were believed *there*, that the sufferings of Christ were designed for but a portion of the race, and that its blessings were limited to a few! Or worse still, if upon angelic ears had fallen that modification of the doctrine, which could not have failed to impress on angelic hearts a doubt of God's sincerity :—Offered to all, but intended for a few!

(3.) On terms easy, and within the reach of every individual. Is it asked, Why has *faith* been made the condition of this salvation? The answer is—How could anything else have been made that condition? For, admitting that some other plan had been devised, it had been essentially necessary to *believe* in the efficacy of that plan before the sinner could have reaped from it any benefit. Hence it is morally impossible that salvation could have been offered on any other terms, than either faith alone, or faith and *something else.* God chose the former; and while therein is revealed the brightest glimpse that finite creatures can have of the riches of his goodness and his glory, man is taught, that not for his violations of the moral law he perishes, but for *refusing to believe.* An atonement has been made for actual transgression, and "he," and he only, "*who believeth not*, shall be damned." But further,

5. *The perpetuity and the fullness of the blessings of this salvation evince its glory, and render it a study worthy of angelic minds.* A glorious mystery is couched in that description of Him by whose sufferings this salvation was effected, when he is styled "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world!" In "looking into these things," they gaze not merely upon Gethsemane and Calvary. They date not the commencement of this glory from what we call the fullness of time. They go back beyond the father of the faithful, who rejoiced to see "his day." They beheld the slaughtered Lamb in the typical sacrifices of righteous Abel; they heard of Christ in the enigmatical promise to our first parents. Reaching back to the original transgression, and extending in its efficacious fullness onward to the end of time, they desire to look into that fountain still unexhausted, and for ever inexhaustible, in which a world may wash away its stains—all its stains—for it cleanses "from all unrighteousness." Crimson and scarlet become like wool and snow. Even on this doomed earth, surrounded by iniquity, and exposed, now to the roaring of him who goeth about seeking whom he may devour, and now to the allurements of an apparent angel of light, a feeble worm of the dust is seen by these heavenly students able to "do all things," and "more than conqueror." It may be fairly questioned whether, in all the universe of God, is to be seen a more glorious spectacle than angels gaze upon, when, in this tainted atmosphere—tempted but triumphant—they mark the *perfect man* and *behold the upright.*

Nor does even this indicate the extent of the glory of "the things into which angels desire to look." The beloved disciple, when in apocalyptic vision his attention was directed to the inner ranks of those concentric circles of which God is the centre, was told, "These are they which came out of deep tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." They were redeemed sinners, the children of men saved by the sufferings of Christ, and exalted thereby to a degree of glory above that of the first-created, who knew no sin and needed no atonement. Well may they desire to look into the mystery and the glory of that salvation which exalts a corrupt nature and an actual transgressor to an eminence that angels may not reach. He whom *they* worship as sovereign took upon him *our* nature, and is not ashamed to call *us* brethren!

In conclusion I remark,

First. This subject cannot be made too frequently the theme of the pulpit. It is the grand central truth around which, as the lesser lights around the sun, all others revolve in glorious harmony. It is the burden of the new song—it is always *new!*

It is not strange, I remark,

Secondly, that there are mysteries in the scheme of redemption which man cannot fathom. It will be for ever true, in heaven as well as on earth—"Great is the mystery of godliness." Its mystery is its glory.

Finally. I ask, what manner of man must he be who deems it beneath *his* notice? Is he too wise to pay any attention to that into which angels desire to look? Strange folly—miserable infatuation—madness—that he for whom the mystery and the glory of this salvation have been revealed should turn from it, and allow his attention to be engrossed by the world, by its veriest trifles, by anything, rather than that into which angels desire to look, and an acquaintance with which can alone save him from hell, and secure his immortality!

SERMON VI.

Talent.

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"For the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability, and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents, went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one, went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them," &c.—Matthew xxv, 14–30.

THE "talent" was originally a species of coin. Metaphorically, it was used to represent human ability, natural gift or endowment; and this figurative, has at length become its literal, use. Theologically, it signifies whatever is intrusted to man by his Maker, to enable him to fulfill the high end of his creation, and is made to constitute the ground and measure of human responsibility. We use it in this latter sense; and the substance of what we intend to say on this theme will be included in the following propositions:—

I. *God has made a wise distribution of talent among men.*

II. *He righteously requires the faithful improvement of the talent given.*

III. *He has appointed a day of reckoning for the use or abuse of talent.*

I. *God has made a wise distribution of talent among men.*

"For the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one."

1. *Physical talent.* This is perhaps the lowest order of talent; but it will be found to include more, and involve higher responsibilities, than is commonly supposed. Con-

sider, for instance, the organs and functions of life, including the arrangements for nutrition and assimilation, by which the body is supported, and its wastes are mysteriously supplied; the circulating system, by which the blood is carried to every part of the corporeal frame; and the organs of respiration, by which the vital properties of atmospheric air are appropriated to the wants of the system. This wonderful power of life, so concealed and incomprehensible, must be a talent committed to us by God, and requiring the constant action of creative power for its support. It is so common that we are apt to consider it as a thing of course, or as self-productive, and therefore lose the moral effect which it ought to produce. But let man attempt to create it, or to sustain it, when God withdraws from it his vital energies, and he will be forced to feel that it is a blessing for which he is indebted to a power infinitely above himself.

Consider the physical arrangements for intelligence and enjoyment. Mind is unquestionably the subject of both; but physical objects affect mind through physical organs. These organs are curiously wrought, and perfectly adapted to the laws of the internal and the external world. Without the organ of smell, the odoriferous particles of matter, and the mental power to discriminate odors, would both be useless; and, of course, man would be destitute of the guards which this sense furnishes against what is fetid and unwholesome, and of the pleasures which now arise from the rich perfumery of nature. Without the organs of taste, we should fail to judge between wholesome and noxious food; be destitute of the pleasures of the palate, and of the discriminations of sapid qualities. Without the organs of hearing, we should have no knowledge of simple elementary sounds, no knowledge of the differences of sounds, of the position of sounding bodies, or of the meaning of sounds. We should be without the enjoyment which all this knowledge produces, and that which arises from the constitutional adaptation of the soul to the beauties of the vocal world. Without the organs of touch, we should be utterly incapable of sensation; we should have no idea of externality, of extension and shape, of size and distance, of hardness and softness, of roughness and smoothness, or of heat and cold; and of course be entirely destitute of nervous pleasure and protection. Without the organs of sight, the beauties of color, with all the pleasure and conveniences which light affords, would be for ever unknown And who, we ask, has formed these organs, so exquisitely wrought, and wonderfully adapted to their respective ends? Reason and Scripture answer—God. They must, therefore, be regarded as an important class of physical talents, involving obligations and responsibilities peculiar to themselves.

Consider, further, the power of activity. Of what avail would have been the functions of life, and the organs of sense, if man had been destitute of adequate muscular power? In his present state labor is his appropriate sphere. His daily bread, as well as his health and happiness, depends upon it. But without the power of motion, under the control of the will, labor would be impracticable, and all other functions of the body would be useless, or utterly destroyed. This power of locomotion and strength, under the guidance of reason, of cultivating the soil, converting the raw material into forms of convenience and beauty, and of equalizing the accommodations of the race by commercial activity, is all the wonderful gift of God. Its evident importance to the well-being of man should inspire us with gratitude, and excite the most anxious inquiry into the obligations it involves.

This is a brief outline of man's intrinsic physical talents. Wealth is also physical, but extrinsic. Whether it is acquired by possession, by inheritance, or by industry, property is the gift of God. It is true that political economy shows man to be the intelligent voluntary agent in the production of wealth. But who made the material world in its primitive state? Who formed the earth with a productive soil? Who arranged the elements, and active agencies, by which the earth is replenished, and its spent energies are restored? Who sends the fertilizing showers? And who has furnished the very powers by which man has carried on all his schemes of agricultural, mechanical, and professional activity? We call our lands our own, and value ourselves upon the sovereign control of our earthly estates, little regarding the important truth, that they are "our Lord's money," lent to us, "to every man according to his several ability," for a limited period, and for definite and specified purposes.

2. *Intellectual talent.* This is a higher order of talent. It marks the grade of man "above the beasts that perish." It includes the power to know, the power to think, and the power to reason.

The power to know is, so far as we can judge, without limit. It embraces the facts of the world revealed to sensation, or the primary and secondary properties of bodies; the facts revealed to consciousness, or the state of the mind at any given time; the facts revealed in reason, or the truths drawn from a comparison of related ideas; and the facts revealed to faith, or the truths of history and revelation. The particulars which these generals include are to us incalculable or infinite; hence, whatever may be the progression of mind in intelligence, its objects will never be exhausted. How far, then, beyond human estimate must be the value of this talent!

The power to think is a subtil and almost indefinable power. To appreciate it, we must study the nature of thought, the objects of thought, and the government of thought. In nature, it is that kind of mental activity which tests the quality, the value, and the uses, of our intelligence. It is the mind busied with what it knows. Its notice of an element of intelligence is sometimes single and momentary—sometimes various and long-continued. The objects of thought may be ideas of perception, as when the mind is busied with the mental states produced by external objects; ideas of consciousness, as when it dwells upon the truths which the mind has revealed to its observation upon itself; ideas of reason, or inferential truths; or ideas of fiction, as those which are produced by imagination from our conceptions. Thought is governed by the laws of association. All thoughts have an intimate, though often mysterious, connection among themselves. It is believed that none are isolated or independent of those which precede them, except such as arise directly from sensation. But the laws of association produce the greatest novelty, variety, and eccentricity, in the trains of thought, so much so, that in the absence of any other governing faculty, this power would be rather a source of amusement than instruction. The will interposes. It governs thought chiefly, by fixing the attention upon one train in preference to another, and thus the unbidden or unwelcome thought disappears for want of attention. The will is influenced in its determinations by curiosity, by passion, by interest, by authority, and by habit. This power of controlling thought—fugitive and capricious as it is—by volition, is wonderfully mysterious, but of vast importance. It reduces chaos to order, and renders the whole available as a source of improvement and happiness. And who can contemplate the restless but controlled activity of mind, revolving, analyzing, and appropriating the vast amount of its intelligence, without being impressed with the inestimable value of this exalted talent?

The power to reason is more generally known. It is the power of drawing conclusions from a comparison of related ideas, and implies the action of association, volition, attention, abstraction, comparison, and judgment. It is one of the noblest distinguishing characteristics of man. Without it he would cease to be man. He might, indeed, have perceptions and passions like the lower animals; but the wonders of discovery by which he is now distinguished, the high range of activity, the lofty stretch of genius, and the elevated power of pleasure, must be exchanged for mere animal exercises and enjoyments. Reason is dependent upon the power to know, and the power to think; and, perhaps, in man, they mutually imply each other. However this may be, it is certain, that if reason were destroyed or dethroned, intellect would be degraded, and mind lose its identity. How invaluable then the talent!

3. *Moral talent,* This must be regarded as the highest order of talent, because it has most to do with the happiness of man, and the glory of God. It includes, intrinsically, the power of moral discriminations, of moral impulsions, and moral retributions.

The discriminating power of conscience is partly intuitive in its action, as when the decisions between right and wrong are instantaneous, without the knowledge of any reason upon which they are founded; and partly deductive, as when the mind upon deliberation, greater or less, decides a thing to be right or wrong for a recognized reason. The power of moral distinctions, whether intuitive or deductive, must be regarded as of paramount importance. Let it once be annihilated, so that right and wrong, virtue and vice, are confounded, and man would be left to the uninterrupted dominion of innate corruption, and society be inevitably destroyed.

Moral impulsions, I think, are also sometimes intuitive, or, if you please, the spontaneous promptings of our high and noble moral constitution. Sometimes the sensibilities are involved, and a man is impelled by his feelings to do or not to do. Sometimes reason is involved, and then a man is impelled to do the right or not to do the wrong, by conclusions drawn from a comparison of related ideas. The power of sensibility and the power of reason may, as I suppose, act separately or conjointly. An impulse against the wrong, and in favor of the right, from either source, is undoubtedly authoritative; but when the promptings of instinct are sustained by those of feeling and of reason, they raise a most formidable barrier to the progress of vice, and afford the highest inducements to the practice of virtue. But what would be the result, if man were destitute of an impulsive conscience? Would not his moral constitution be essentially defective? He might make all the distinctions between virtue and vice, piety and impiety; but he would not be aware of more obligation to the one than to the other. Corrupted passion, excited curiosity, and all the blind selfishness of his soul, would urge him on irresistibly to sin and perdition. How invaluable, then, that moral arrangement by which this seemingly inevitable tendency to destruction is counteracted! A mighty voice thunders from the deep recesses of the soul in remonstrance against the meditated crime, and the secret whispers of conscience invite and allure him to the decisions of virtue, and the way to God and heaven.

Moral retributions are partly constitutional, and partly voluntary. It is not wholly optional with the sinner whether he will or not be lashed by conscience for his disobedience. It is a law of his moral nature to bring upon him the sad, sickening thought, that he has dishonored himself and insulted his Maker, his "secret faults" and "presumptuous sins." This is what haunts him by day and by night, fills his bed with coals of fire, and turns his bosom into a hell! But voluntary reflection will give a man sorrow for reasons, and make his deliberate deductions the immediate source of his torment. It is fearful to endure the reproaches of conscience, arising spontaneously from the mere fact of a corrupted heart, or a vicious life; but a recognition of the holiness of God, and the purity of his law; of the sacredness of violated relations, and the recklessness of a sinful life, gives definiteness to the guilt, and poignancy to the suffering. The same law holds true in regard to the pleasures of a mind obedient to conscience. They arise spontaneously from the mere fact of the right, or they are produced by voluntarily contemplating the right, and in either case their obvious design is to encourage obedience to the laws of our being.

These are the intrinsic moral talents committed to men; and they include the power of indefinite moral development, of unlimited moral excellence, and of infinite increase in happiness. Besides these, in a theological sense, there are extrinsic moral talents of vast importance, with which God has favored us. Christ is a talent of priceless worth. The Holy Ghost, the revelation of God, the ministry of the word, and the prayers, exhortations, and examples of good men, are gifts of God for the most exalted purposes. Learning is talent. Genius is talent. Place, office, and influence, are talents, unequally, it is true, but wisely distributed, at least so far as they depend upon God. His rules of distribution, it is true, are wholly beyond the reach of our intelligence, but they have their vindication in the eternal rectitude of the Infinite Mind.

II. *God righteously requires the faithful improvement of these talents.*

1. *This is argued from the fact of their gift.* For what purpose can God have thus wonderfully endowed man? Did he give him this physical frame, with its functions of life, its organs of intelligence, and its power of activity, that it might lie dormant, or be degraded to the purposes of sin? To assert this, would be a reflection upon divine wisdom and goodness. God cannot exert the creative power in vain. If man had been intended for idleness, he must have received a constitution exactly corresponding with this design. But his power of activity, capable of large improvement and wise appropriation, is proof sufficient that this power was to be rendered available to its

utmost extent, for purposes of good to the race, and glory to God.

Would an infinitely wise and holy Being have conferred upon man the power to know, the power to think, and the power to reason, if it had been a matter of no importance what, or how much he should know; to what purposes his knowledge should be appropriated; what should be the character and tendency of his thoughts, and what the manner, design, and influence, of his reasonings? Such an objectless effort of divine power cannot be conceived but by a perverted mind. Irresponsible talents, of such formidable power, would have been a curse, and not a blessing. From the gift of intellect, with its irrepressible energies, and strongly marked constitutional tendencies, no inference can be more direct and indubitable, than that God designed to govern it, and that he will inevitably hold man to a strict responsibility for the extent of its development, and the mode of its application.

The high moral ends for which God has endowed man with a conscience, are equally evident. It must be his imperative duty to practice the most careful discriminations between the right and the wrong; to encourage and obey to the utmost his impulsions against vice, and in favor of virtue, and to submit, with subdued and filial temper, to the chastisements which discourage sin, and to make the right practical use of the awards of virtue, or God would never have given him the faculties for the exalted purposes. All the blessings of the remedial dispensation are rich and significant, in the light of their elevated designs, and the responsibility of man; but, apart from these, they can only be considered a fearful waste of toil and suffering. To provide for the greatest attainable excellence and happiness of mind; to develop the controlling elements of the divine government in their essential purity and power; to reveal and perfect the great social system, and to people heaven with "the spirits of the just made perfect," are objects worthy of God, and plainly indicated by the moral attributes of the race, and the moral arrangements of this trial state.

2. *We argue the duty of improvement from the nature of these gifts.* In themselves, they are valuable and useful to the highest degree, and so wisely and benevolently ad-

justed as to secure the greatest possible good to man. Besides; it is found to be nearly a universal law of talent, that it increases by use and diminishes by neglect. If the body is brought into that kind of habitual activity, which exercises faithfully and constantly every muscle up to the extent of its ability, without going beyond it, it expands and strengthens in every part to an astonishing degree; physical ability becomes equal to the greatest necessary exertions, and reaches a power of endurance almost incredible. What gave such agility and strength to the Spartan youths? What were the means of acquiring that sinewy arm, expanded chest, and iron frame, which enabled them to perform such prodigies of might and valor in the arena of athletic strife, or upon the battle field? Action! action was the grand secret of this astonishing physical development; and who can doubt that it has the same power now, as in olden times, to work its miracles upon the human frame? Is there not sufficient inducement to effort? If the sacrifices and exertions of the Grecian schools could be endured, without murmuring, for many years, for no other purpose than to secure the victor's crown, what ought we not to undergo, in preparation for the toil and suffering which the interests of the world require? We greatly err in supposing that this department of education is indifferent, or of trifling importance. Increased physical power must give a firmer hold upon the available means of permanent enjoyment, stronger influence over the destinies of the race, and a loftier bearing to the action of mind. It is sickening to see what a race of effeminate, diseased, and powerless beings we are, compared with the giant form, the stately tread, the hardy hand, and iron constitution, of many of our fathers! Idleness, corruption, and luxury, have crippled our energies, and wofully degraded our physical frames! Alas! sin has dreadfully cursed the bodies of men. Purity, activity, and care, had made us strong to labor, swift to move, and hardy to endure, in the cause of humanity and God. And who can fail to see, in this intrinsic power of physical development, the imperative obligation to the exertion it requires?

Wealth is increased by proper activity. But does this increase confer upon us the right to divert it from its legitimate use? It is unquestionably our duty to "occupy" this talent according to our several ability; with our "five talents" to "gain other five," as often as industry, frugality, and honesty, will allow. But are we, therefore, to forget that it is "our Lord's money," and withhold it from the great moral and religious enterprises to which he has appropriated it, to gratify corrupted passion, or a morbid love of gain? The day of reckoning will show what a sad perversion this is.

But the same law of progression is applicable to intellectual talent. Some degree of mental improvement is undoubtedly secured by the constitution of mind. Its natural growth from infancy to manhood is sufficient to indicate its intrinsic power of enlargement. But it is established by experience, that the true destiny of intellect can be reached by vigorous effort alone. Take two minds of equal power; leave one of them to his mere constitutional tendencies, without education; but accustom the other to regular and severe application to the fiercer conflicts of mind, in the fields of abstract science and practical truth; imbue him with the spirit of a scholar, so that there are no heights which he dare not attempt, no difficulties which he dare not engage, no obstacles which he cannot surmount; inure him to the utmost conquests, practicable to the combined action of intelligence, thought, and reason; and what is the result? It must be easy to tell. The one looks upon the mere surface of things, while the other dives into the depths of truths and principles of the utmost importance to the race. The one contents himself with superstitious wonder, where the other discovers the workings of secret causes and uniform laws, under the guidance of the great Creator, for the operation of results essential to the harmony of the universe and the well-being of man. The one stares with surprise, where the other admires, adores, and loves. What a sublime power of enjoyment, what a vast range of usefulness, what an enlarged capacity for receiving God, and grasping the great truths of revelation, may be acquired by long-continued and well-directed mental industry! And shall this power of indefinite enlargement for such glorious purposes be neglected or abused? Shall the fires of intellect, kindled by the breath of God, fade and go out in darkness and shame? To us it is clear, no error can be greater, and few more injurious, than that the improvement or neglect of mind is a matter of entire indifference. That if accident, caprice, or necessity, lead to a course of education, it is well; but, if not, it is equally well! We do not, of course, insist upon the same kind and mode of education for all. But we cannot allow that mind can be neglected with impunity; that ignorance and intelligence are alike indifferent to God, or that perverted intellect can ever be irresponsible. In this power of indefinite improvement by mental activity, I read the imperious will of Jehovah. Education is clearly indicated and required by the constitution of mind; whoever neglects it, violates the laws of his being, and dishonors his Maker. What, we ask, would be the result, if this great principle were thoroughly taken in, and appreciated by the race? It would heave the mighty mass, like the throes of an earthquake! It would be the application of resurrection power to the hosts of the dead!

But this progressive power must take hold of the moral, as well as of the physical and intellectual man. Perfect symmetry in development is the only security against monstrous formations, and a dangerous application of power. Nor is the moral mind less capable of progression than the intellectual. If the power of virtue and piety may once be brought into requisition, there is no agency that can limit its exercise, or fix bounds to its increase. If anything is infinite, it is goodness. If man's power of progression in anything is indefinite, it is in virtue and holiness. The exalted pre-eminence of the moral mind is seen in old age and in the hour of death, when the depth of its enjoyment, and the power of its triumphs, increase, as everything else fades and disappears.

But to conclude this argument. Let us suppose that the power of activity, physical, intellectual, and moral, with which the race is endowed, were brought into full and habitual exercise, and properly directed, we should then begin to see what glories the human creation reveals; what perfection of beauty may adorn the race, and what sublime elevation was intended in the destiny of man. Wo to the world for the power of sin! It has diseased our bodies, dwarfed our intellects, and corrupted our hearts! What an occasion of wonder and gratitude, that the power of improvement was not utterly destroyed amid the general wreck!

3. *I argue the duty of improvement from the individual and social condition of the race.* If it were true that man is personally in no need of the enlargement of his powers; that he is individually as well off in his sickly, enfeebled, and dwarfish state, as he would be with his capabilities all fully developed and properly applied, one source of our argument would be lost. But what would be the result, if man were to remain with no more than his constitutional powers, unimproved by education or personal effort? Would not the extreme disproportion between his wants and resources prove his inevitable ruin? A narrow inspection of the facts will show, that God has anticipated his improvement in his individual necessities. He needs, and must have, more bread, and other earthly comforts, than his physical powers in their native state can furnish. To overcome the obstacles that oppose his progress in refinement; to discover the resources of life in the animal, mineral, and vegetable kingdoms, and to provide for the happiness of his soul, he needs more intellectual power than he has at first received. He needs more accurate moral discrimination, stronger moral impulsions, and keener moral sensibilities, than he originally possesses, to secure the awards of virtue in this life, to shun the horrors of hell, and gain the happiness of heaven, in the life to come. Put him upon his first allowance in all these respects, and suffer him still to live, and who can fail to see that a thousand craving wants must implore in vain? A thousand nameless ills would crowd every hour of his existence, and his crying sins clamor for the indignation of Heaven. No, my brethren, God has so made man as to need more physical, intellectual, and moral power, than he has given him. He must, therefore, have contemplated the improvement of our talents up to the amount of our ability. He has implanted the germs, but made the growth and the fruit depend upon ourselves.

Again, man is a social being; and if we shall find that, in the necessary structure of society, God has made arrangements to use more talents than he has given; that the great ends of social order must be effectually defeated without the enlargement, and religious appropriation of our faculties, a great accession of strength will be gained to our advancing argument. And what are the facts? Could the strength of man, just as it would be without activity, ever achieve the physical labors and results that the social state requires? Would it be adequate to erect the edifices, and create the public works, necessary for national convenience and defense? And how could the objects of civilization be secured if man's intellect remained undeveloped? Barbarism would be the only social state of which he would then be capable. The arts and sciences, domestic comforts, true religion, and good government, must all be utterly impracticable. And how would the grand moral enterprises of the social order fare, if none but the infant moral powers of man were brought to bear upon the various forms of national sin, and employed in rearing the golden superstructure of the national morals? The heart of every nation would die! Mammoth vices would stalk abroad in proud defiance of honor, religion, and truth; and the demon of national corruption would laugh, with fiendish joy, at murdered innocence and crushed and bleeding virtue! To oppose successfully these fearful advances of sin, and preserve the very existence of society, vast improvement in every department of talent is absolutely necessary. But to raise it to its intended and practicable perfection, every human energy must reach its manhood, and with its utmost strength fearlessly grapple with the deadly foes of God and man. The calls of society are at this very moment loud and beseeching for far more talents than the world possesses! It is frightful to see, and humiliating to acknowledge it; but it is alarmingly true, that such has been the guilty neglect of physical, intellectual, and moral culture, that the necessities of the world have immeasurably outgrown its power! It is under the gathering pressure of this immense disproportion, that society, at this very moment, reels from its foundations, and threatens to bury the happiness and hopes of the world in its fall! And if more power than the world possesses is actually and imperatively demanded for the well-being and perfection of society, what criminality to withhold what we have! Enough remaining there may be to save the world from dissolution; but not enough to bring it to its intended perfection. By so much as the power of the race is less than it might have been, by just so much we must fall short of our once practicable destiny! And let every individual know, that just so far as he suffers indolence and sin to diminish the amount of his attainable excellence and ability, by just so much he contributes to drag down the race from its intended exaltation!

4. *We argue the duty of improvement from the authority of God.* The command of God to every man, substantially, is, "Go work in my vineyard." God's vineyard is a vast field of industry. God himself is the example, and Christ sustains it. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." "I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day, the night cometh when no man can work." Man must follow this divine example. "Be strong, all ye people of the Lord, saith the Lord, and work, for I am with you." "This we commanded you if any would not work, neither should he eat." "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling." The Bible is a book of industry. It lays out work for the whole of time, and for every individual of the human race. The sluggard is condemned with unsparing severity. The man of physical and mental activity, under the high motives of the gospel, is applauded and encouraged by the most exalted rewards, in this and the life to come. Our parable is divine authority for the most imperative obligation to improvement in every department of talent. "Occupy till I come" is the charge to all, accompanying every gift. And who, I entreat you, can resist with impunity authority so legitimate and sacred?

Let it then be considered, that all our talents are the free gift of God; that they are of the greatest possible value, and include the capability of indefinite expansion; that their improvement is demanded by the individual and social condition of the race, and by the authority of God; and who will not be alarmed at the indolence of the world, and the vicious appropriation of the talents of men? What argument can be more conclusive, and what obligation more absolute, than those which sustain and require the utmost activity and devotion in the improvement of every talent committed to us by our heavenly Father?

III. *God has appointed a day of reckoning for the use or abuse of talent.*

1. *Of this there is abundant evidence,* from Scripture, sustained by right reason. "After a long time the lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them." Here the most wicked abuse of talent may occur with seeming impunity. Men hide their talents in the earth; conceal or criminally misuse their Lord's money! The body is degraded to a mere organ of selfishness: an instrument of corrupted passion or beastly appetite! The mind is wasted or impaired in its energies; depraved and corrupted in its moral propensities; allowed to fade from its original glory by mere neglect, or by guilty coalition, claims its affinity with brutes and devils! The heart's best affections are allowed to wither unimproved, or are shamefully perverted and pressed into the service of sin! Learning, genius, wealth, and place, arrayed against God! To suppose that the righteous "Judge of all the earth" is either indifferent to such shocking perversions and horrid obscenities, among those who were intended to reflect his image; or that he is without the disposition or power to punish for such heaven-daring offenses, is to degrade ourselves by essaying to dishonor God, and to become by our own act the victims of a delusion from which we shall be finally awaked by the awful thunders of the judgment! "Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil; of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile." "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." "Because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained." Who can look upon this formidable array of Holy Scripture, and believe that perverted talent is

irresponsible, or deny the doctrine of a general judgment?

2. *It will be a day of sudden and terrific grandeur.* "But the day of the Lord shall so come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up." "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first." What a succession of events is here described! What scene can be more awfully sublime? The sudden shout of a descending Lord; the solemn "voice of the archangel," and the awful peals of "the trump of God," proclaiming the end of time, and the gathering of the world to the judgment-seat; the resurrection of the dead; the heavens on fire; the earth dissolving in flames, and the fearful rush of blazing planets, stars, and suns, mingled with the acclamations of the righteous as they fly up to meet their Lord in the air; and the wailings of the wicked, as the throne of the Judge appears in the heavens, must, all together, constitute a scene so terrific and grand, so utterly appalling, as immeasurably to exceed all human conception.

> "Man starting from his couch shall sleep no more!
> The day is broke which never more shall close!
> Above, around, beneath, amazement all!
> Terror and glory join'd in their extremes!
> Our God in grandeur, and our world on fire!"

3. *Every man must be there to account for himself.* "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations." "For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Resistance, or apologies, or concealment, will be utterly vain. The decree is inevitable, and divine Omnipotence will secure its execution. From continent, island, and ocean, the hosts of the dead shall be gathered around the throne of judgment. Time, from his birth, hath not buried a son who will not be there; and the living shall

be changed sudden as the lightning's flash, and hasten on to swell the vast and final concourse of the world! What state of mind would be suited to such a scene as this? Does any man wish to be overtaken by that day with heart "at enmity with God?"

4. *The moral purposes of the day are crowded with fearful interest and importance.* The righteous must be separated from the wicked. The crimes of unforgiven sinners must be revealed to the gaze of angels, and an assembled world. "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil." It must be a day of awful disclosures. It will then be seen what disposition men have made of the talents God has given them. The man whose body has been enfeebled, diseased, and destroyed by sin, must give account of the power of life, the physical arrangements for intelligence and enjoyment, and the power of activity, which he has received from his Creator. It will then appear that, by obeying the laws of his being, he might have added many years to that life, which could have served the most valuable ends; but which has terminated miserably, by neglect or abuse. By suitable care and activity his physical frame might have vastly increased its power of endurance and efficiency, in the arduous toils of a probationary state. The abuses and crimes which have engendered guilty disease can now no longer be concealed. Every offense against the laws of his constitution must be dragged to light, and he must see and confess the causes which have perverted his senses, enfeebled his muscular energies, and prematurely hurried him to the grave.

The man of wealth will be called out to give an account of every dollar of "his Lord's money." Alas! what literal accuracy in the accounts! What unexpected strictness in the reckoning! The omniscience of God will not have allowed a single wasted particle of all his vast treasures to escape notice. The principle of just responsibility, which would hold him to an account for the whole, must also for the least fraction. Here, then, must be seen what has become of the money which God gave him to relieve the distresses of the poor and the dying; to diffuse the principles of sound and sanctified learning among men; to support the glorious gospel of the Son of God; to sustain the missionary of the cross; to give the Bible to the destitute; or in any way to ameliorate the condition of man, to rescue sinners from the power of the devil, to rob hell of its prey, and bring immortal souls to heaven. If it shall be found that the means destined to such benevolence, such noble ends, have been diverted, hoarded up, squandered in idle, wicked speculations, or prostituted to the purposes of degraded appetite, or corrupted passion, God will require it at his hands. Alas! what quaking at the judgment, when the summons shall roll out from the throne of justice, "Give account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward."

The man of strong native intellect will be required to answer for its neglect or abuse, in the midst of the best opportunities for development and righteous appropriation. His intelligence will be contrasted with his privileges; what he has known with what he might have known; and it will be demanded why he has grown up in ignorance, with the light of science flaming around him. His grievous error in supposing that God was indifferent to the education of mind, and that he would hold neglected or perverted intellect irresponsible, will be clearly revealed. He must know that voluntary ignorance is sin; and if his high powers of intelligence have been improved only to be devoted to the devil, the frightful disclosures will show that not a single delinquency has been overlooked, not a crime forgotten. The secret of his thoughts will be exposed; his dark, concealed reflections revealed in contrast with the exalted themes of honor and usefulness which might have occupied his mind; his crazy, listless, dissipated thoughts, contrasted with the piously controlled reflections of a well-regulated mind. His prostrated reason, powerless by neglect, or vicious by perversion, must be held to account for its guilty weakness or its base devotion to error.

The man of a corrupted heart, a degraded conscience, must see in the light of the judgment his prostrated power of moral distinctions, of moral impulsions, and of moral retributions. As a probationer, he must answer for the gift of the gospel slighted; the Holy Spirit grieved and rejected; the Saviour crucified afresh, and his soul for ever lost.

Social offenders must render up their account to God. Guilty parents must meet the responsibility of having given to their children diseased and enfeebled bodies, allowed them to grow up with degraded intellects and corrupted hearts; by criminal negligence or vicious example having laid the fatal train of misery and death, reaching on through succeeding generations to eternity. The young man must show why he has allowed the heedless flight of so many golden hours, which ought to have been seized for thorough preparation, to act a noble part in the fierce conflicts of mind, decisive of human character and destiny. Woman, perhaps for the first time in her history, will wake up to the amount of her fearful power for good or for evil, and render a strict account for the influence of her peculiar talents, her personal charms, and her noiseless, but unresisted authority, in controlling the elements, guiding the genius, and fixing the destiny of her age. The man of genius must show to what purpose he has devoted his talents. The author must recognize his books, with the vast train of effects which has followed them. The man of science and letters must be called out to show what impress he has stamped upon his generation. The professed disciple of Christ must answer for his gifts in exhortation and prayer, and the social effects of his every-day life. The minister from the desk must stand out and account for his power of explanation, of argument, and persuasion. The solemn duties of the pastoral office must pass in review before him, and he must look his congregations in the face! If his talents have been misimproved, his holy work neglected, and his hearers lost, the disclosures will be fearful and condemning, but literally true. The lawyer from the bar, and the judge from the bench, must account for their solemn mockery of justice. The statesman must show why he has used all his power for party ends, corrupted the fountains of public morals, fumed his head with wine, and degraded his passions with women; perjured himself before the omniscient God; called heaven to witness his hypocrisy, and dared the vengeance of Jehovah, by his crimes against conscience and the public rights, in the midst of the most flattering protestations of perfect sincerity and devoted patriotism! Alas! what a day of disclosures! It is enough to appall the stoutest heart, and wring a groan of wo from the affrighted infidel, as his quickened memory calls up his blasphemous libels upon the word of God, his infamous war upon Jehovah, who has now girded himself for the final conflict.

5. *It will be a day of solemn and immutable retribution.* "And to you who are troubled, rest with us when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe in that day." Some, then, there are, whose hearts have relented; who have savingly believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, whose sins have been pardoned, whose souls have been regenerated and sanctified, by the power of the Holy Ghost, through the blood of the covenant. Of these, some, whose lives have been dishonored by softness, idleness, ignorance, or vice, have just been pardoned in time to escape hell! But others have nobly used their Lord's money. They have obeyed the command, "Occupy till I come." Their "bodies" have been regarded as the "temples of the Holy Ghost;" their physical energies, carefully preserved and nobly developed by untiring activity. Their powers of intelligence, and thought, and reason, have been improved by every means within the reach of industry and indomitable perseverance. Their power of virtue has accumulated strength from the most devoted obedience to the decisions of conscience; by habits of uncompromising resistance to the wrong, and attachment to the right. Their lives have been devoted to the good of their race. They have asked and received pardon of God for all their imperfections, and as Christians they have watched, and prayed, and labored for the best good of the world. They have used their natural abilities, their learning, and professions, to glorify God. As men of wealth, they have laid all upon the altar. Their means have gone to relieve the poor, to enlighten the ignorant, and to send the Bible and the gospel to the destitute. Hundreds and thousands have been saved from wretchedness and hell, by their instrumentality. In all their natural and official rela-

tions to society, they have been "a terror to evil-doers, and a praise to them that do well."

To each of these God will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord;"—joy that thy Lord hath prepared for thee by his sufferings and death, and that thou shalt share with him—joy that is unending in the paradise of God. O! the transcendent glory of "the sacramental host of God's elect" as "they enter in through the gates into the city," hailed by myriads of angels, welcomed by the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to their eternal rest!

But a vast multitude are left behind. They have "buried their Lord's money." They have neglected or perverted the talents God has given them. They have polluted their bodies, degraded their intellects, and ruined their souls. Time has been squandered and eternity lost. Their dark deeds of personal degradation and social crime have been dragged to the light, and the day of retribution has come. The voice of stern, relentless justice, cries, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." O! fearful punishment! There is something awful in this "darkness." The light of the sun may not penetrate the abode of the lost. The star of night may not visit this world of wrath. It is the night of sin; unmingled, unmitigated sin! Not a single virtue there, not a holy motive, or a pious thought, or a good desire! It is the awful gathering together of the world's corruption! The crowding into one dark place the sins and blasphemies of a guilty universe! It is the night of suffering and punishment. "Punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power." O, if the glory of God might shine into those dark hearts; if the star of hope might shoot its glimmering rays athwart that dungeon gloom, what relief to those suffering, groping crowds! Just retribution! In life, amid the blaze of gospel day, they "loved darkness rather than light." For their deeds of pollution, of infamy, and crime, they sought the covert of night. They shrank with instinctive horror from the light whichth reatened to reveal the dark, but cherished, corruptions of their hearts and lives. Darkness was their guilty choice on earth, and "outer darkness" shall be their fearful doom in hell. Wo to the man whose laugh of fiendish joy on earth has ended in the wailings of despair! Whose horrid cursings and blasphemies began in time to go on in eternity! Whose abuse of talent, and contempt of God in his trial state, have drawn down upon his crushed and suffering spirit, "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish," "where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched!" Alas! "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" "where the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever."

1. In conclusion: *It is evident that, in the distribution of talents, diversity, and not uniformity, is the rule.* "To one he gives five, to another, two to another one." This is according to fact, and we may not arraign the divine administration for this mode of dispensing favors. God has a right to do what he will with his own; and, as we have seen, his immutable righteousness and wisdom are the guaranty, that this mode of distribution is entirely the best, for the interest of man, and for his own glory. Another view will show, that he who has less, has no cause to murmur, while he who has more, has no cause to be vain.

2. *The talents given are, in every case, the exact measure of responsibility.* How little do we think, while we envy the talents of others, that we may have already acquired alarming guilt for the misimprovement of our own! And that what we have, rightly improved, would raise us to an eminence far above many of more favored beginnings, who have degraded their native gifts to a level with the brutes! We do not reflect how fearful a responsibility is laid upon those of superior parts, from which we are mercifully saved; that, if rightly used, our limited talents are enough to raise us to a glory of nature far above that of the tallest seraph now in the world of light! But, if neglected and misapplied, they are enough to damn us for ever! On the other hand, vain men, who are priding themselves upon their elevation of mind, their profound learning, their brilliant parts, or splendid rank, little think of the amount of responsibility which their boasted talents involve. We have seen that God has not bestowed a gift on man which

he will not require again, with due improvement. "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required."

3. *The day of final reckoning will surely come;* the dreadful day when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed. Then it will appear, that in the midst of all the diversity of gifts, over which men have so constantly and rashly complained, there is a perfect equality—an equality of adjustment between talents and responsibility, between probation and retribution. How immensely important, therefore, the bearing of every moral action! of what eternal moment the disposition we make of every gift of God! O that I could rouse the slumberings of the spiritually dead! that I could reach the ears of earth's guilty millions! I would speak to the man of honor, of wealth, of science, and of rank, in tones of thunder and alarm! I would call to a stand the whirling, dancing, giddy throng, upon the crumbling verge of probation—above the breaking billows of eternal wrath! I would summon the men of genius, and talent, and letters, to a view of the past, and of generations to come; to the scenes of the death-bed, and to the retributions of eternity; and bid them snatch their periled souls from the devouring flames; rescue our thoughtless, furious, headlong age from the infamy and ruin of perverted talent; and seize the fountains of public morals, opinions, and thought, and purify them, that they may cease to pour out the waters of death upon our fallen and suffering world. I would call around them the sighs of murdered hearts, the groans of crushed, immortal minds, and the bleeding corpses of slaughtered millions, and beseech them—in the name of God and humanity—to turn the course of human conduct from sin and death to holiness and heaven. I would send out the summons upon the winds and the waves, to the saints of God, to marshal anew—enter afresh the deadly strife, and fight like champions of Jesus, till the cry of victory shall sound out from every rank of God's embattled hosts; till, from every continent, island, and sea, the shout shall go up, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ;" and the high response shall roll out from heaven, "as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

SERMON VII.

The Duty of Submission to God.

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"Submit yourselves, therefore, to God."—James iv, 7.

If an intelligent inhabitant of some other world—some sinless world—were to receive a brief outline of the history of the fall of man and his present condition;—if, for instance, he were to learn that man, having been placed in a garden of delights at his creation, standing high in intelligence, in moral excellence, in authority, and in the favor of his God, had, nevertheless, in an evil hour, yielded to the force of temptation, lost his innocency, his glory, and the favor of his Creator, and plunged himself into untold woes:—further, that though thus wretched, his case was not entirely hopeless; that there was a possibility of restoration; that, indeed, overtures to effect it had been made, either on the part of God or man, not stated which; that there was on the one part a strong desire for reconciliation, and efforts after it; but that, on the other, not stated which, there was reluctance, aversion, and an unwillingness for peace; what, think you, would be the natural conclusion of such an unsophisticated mind, ignorant of the nature of sin, as to whether the offers of reconciliation had come from God or man? as to whether the reluctance and aversion were on the part of God, or man? Would it not be reasonable for him to conclude, that man, having thoughtlessly plunged himself from a height of happiness to a depth of wo, would, on discovering his error, lament it; and, with bitter tears and earnest cries, return to the Father of spirits, and beseech him for mercy? And that God, whose confidence had been betrayed, whose law had been dishonored, and his blessings spurned, might justly hesitate to receive so perfidious a creature again into his bosom? But we know how very different all this is from the true state of the case. The offended God makes the proposition of peace to offending man. The everlasting Jehovah sues for reconciliation with a worm of the dust! Nor is he content with *making* the offer; he repeats it—he urges it—he pleads—he entreats man to be reconciled unto him. Formerly, he may have employed himself in adding world to world—system to system—constellation to constellation, extending the boundaries of his empire further and wider into the regions of infinite space; angels, archangels, seraphim, cherubim—the countless orders of the heavenly hierarchy, and the myriads of beings who may people every rolling globe, may have employed his creating energies; but now, taking the Bible for our guide, he stands all day long stretching out his hands to a gainsaying and disobedient people. Speaking after the manner of men, it is, as if the thoughts of this lost world so affected him, that he could do nothing else but devote his whole attention to it. Like the shepherd, who left his ninety and nine sheep to go after the one that had gone astray, our heavenly Father seems to live and act as though this lost world were his whole concern. Man, on the other hand, guilty, dependent, weak, and wretched, turns himself away from the blessings of his God. He will not come unto him that he might have life. He spurns him; he hates him; he continues in his rebellion, as though daring the thunderbolts of the Almighty, and greedy of his own damnation.*

In the great work of reconciling man to himself, God would bring all the moral force to bear upon his case that can be brought. He employs himself in the work. He sends forth his servants early and late. He sent his prophets. He sent his Son. He sends his Spirit. Angels are employed—men are employed. Like a father whose child has fallen into the river, he not only hastens himself, but he calls for assistance. The angels are all ministering spirits in this work; and men, who are themselves saved, are immediately pressed into the service. It is the business of the church of the living God to help him in saving the world. And in the intense feelings of his paternal heart, he pronounces a curse upon those who come not up to the help of the Lord against the mighty. This is the work of all the church; but a prominent part of it devolves on the ministry. Theirs is the office to speak for God—to lift up the voice in "the high places," by night and by day—in all seasons praying them, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God. In the discharge of this holy office we come to you and beseech you, therefore, to *submit yourselves to God.* It is your duty and your interest to do so. Duty and interest go hand in hand; they are inseparable. But the eye of faith only can at all times see the link that unites them. Do your duty, and God will take care of your interest. If, therefore, we show it to be your duty to submit yourself to his authority, be assured that we have shown it also to be your highest gain, glory, and happiness. It is your duty then,

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* The author would not be understood as intending to affirm, in the above paragraph, either that God is incapable of doing two things at the same moment, or that he is literally so absorbed in accomplishing the salvation of man, that he neglects to pay attention to the remaining portions of his works.

I. ON THE GROUNDS OF JUSTICE. You owe him your allegiance. You are his—not your own. "He hath made us, and not we ourselves." When a workman makes a piece of mechanism—his time his own—his materials his own—the work is his. He has a right to whatever honor or profit may result from it. If he is by any means deprived of the honor or profit of his labors, injustice is done to him. So with God. He made our bodies—he made our souls. We are his in a more perfect sense than any piece of mechanism can be the property of man.

He made us for his glory. Not that God is selfish; he is the reverse. But so it is, that the glory of God works the highest happiness of his creatures. The more they see of his glory, the more blessed they are. New creatures added to his creation, present new views of that glory, and contribute additional happiness to other orders of being. Man, being created in the image of God, was designed to set forth new and delightful views of the divine perfections for the benefit of other intelligences. And when he fell, defacing the divine image, he committed not only an act of injustice toward God, but a fraud upon the universe. When he reached forth his hand and took the interdicted fruit, it was not only the bough of the tree whence he plucked it that was shaken, but the earth; and the jarring vibration grated harsh thunder on the nerves of all holy beings through the Almighty's boundless domain. God, as the Father and Head of all, feels it most sensibly. He is injured through them. He resents it, but hastens to repair it. O man! who art living in sin, thou art injuring and defrauding thy Maker. Every day, every hour, of thy life, art thou committing the most flagrant act of injustice. "Will a man rob God?" was once asked; and answered, "Yea; ye have robbed me, even this whole nation." And this was the best nation then on the face of the earth. Whole nations at this day are robbing him; and as it is with nations, so it is with individuals. They think it a matter of course. There is many a man who would scorn to be dishonest toward his fellow-man, who thinks it no discredit to be dishonest toward God. Nay, we act like a horde of banditti, who, for mutual interest, agree not to rob each other, and punish dishonesty among themselves, while they conspire together to rob others. So men make laws to regulate the administration of justice among themselves, punishing departures from it with great severity, while each esteems it a trifling thing to trample on the rights of his Maker. Alas! what madness, as though God did not see; as though the Almighty did not regard. Verily, there is a day of reckoning at hand, when men will learn that the MAJESTY of heaven cannot be insulted and defrauded with impunity.

If God had created us for any other than a benevolent purpose, we might have some excuse for treating him thus. If we had been the creatures of a malevolent being—if we had been brought into existence miserable, and to *be* miserable, we might have been under no obligations to serve our Maker. But if God has created us for his glory —to show forth his glory, and to share his glory—to be happy, and to make others happy—then are we as depraved as Satan himself, or we would not refuse him his due;—it is our reasonable service. We, therefore, argue the duty of submission to him,

II. ON THE GROUNDS OF GRATITUDE. Had we remained holy as he made us, we might have claimed his protection, and everything we needed for our happiness, on the grounds of justice. Justice itself demands that God shall guard the happiness of those who do his will and abide in their first estate. While they do right, justice will secure their happiness. But the sin of man arrayed the justice of God against him. Justice called for his destruction, not his safety. He had nothing more to look for on that ground but judgment and fiery indignation. If, therefore, he is not destroyed, it is of mercy. His preservation—his food, raiment, every good of this life, and all spiritual blessings—enlightenment, conviction, justification, regeneration, sanctification, faith, hope, love, comfort here, and glory hereafter—all are of mercy. Herein are the claims that God has on our gratitude. He has gone far beyond what justice required of him as our Creator and Preserver. He has in mercy become our Redeemer. This heightens his claims on our hearts and services, and we become not only unjust, but ungrateful, if we refuse to submit. For illustration let us suppose a case.

We have read of a man—such a one as Howard, the philanthropist—in a distant country. He was a good man —virtuous, benevolent; went about, like his Master, doing good—every way amiable, and worthy of being loved. We feel as if such a one had a claim upon us—on our admiration, on our affections. He was an honor to humanity, and a blessing to his race; and, as such, we admire, we love him. This is the lowest ground on which the claims of God rest. We have heard of him by the hearing of the ear. He is great, wise, powerful, benevolent; he has conferred inestimable blessings on our race: we ought to admire, we ought to love him, with a boundless affection. Howard's benevolence was only a drop from this ocean; the virtues of all good men, in all ages, were only as the twinkling stars to the sun; or as the light of the moon received from him and reflected on the world. Even here his claims are beyond expression—infinite.

But if such a virtuous and benevolent man, as we have supposed, were our neighbor—our kinsman, our personal friend, to whom we could go at any time and tell our wants and woes, and find a sympathizing heart and an open hand; if he were such a one as would come to us of his own accord, and encourage us to tell him our need, in order to relieve it, methinks our very selfishness would teach us to love him. Could we value such a friend too highly? Could we love him too much? Could we refuse him any reasonable demand? *No;* or we would be demons, not men. And is not God all this to us? Has he not come nigh us, pitching his tabernacle among men? Does he not come of his own accord and tell us to cast our burdens on him? Does not he encourage us to open our enlarged desires—to ask and receive, that our joy may be full? He is the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother; whose care exceeds that of a father, and his tenderness that of a mother. Submit yourselves, therefore, to God. Suffer him no longer in bitterness to exclaim, "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me."

But if this supposed friend of ours—this kinsman, brother, or father—were to go further than merely to give his substance to us as we had need; if he were willing to undergo personal loss and suffering for our sake, what, then, would not his claims rise still higher, and our obligations correspond with them? Most certainly. A man will part with his property before he will give his back to the lash, or his feet to the stocks; and "all that a man hath will he give for his life." Personal suffering, therefore, is the highest proof of love; and this is not wanting in our heavenly Friend. Perhaps our philosophy may scarcely allow us to think of the Father as capable of suffering, though he gives his beloved, his only-begotten Son, from his bosom, as a sacrifice for us; appealing to our parental feelings to teach us the value of the gift, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son;" gave him to labor, to shame, to death. Ah! if this was not suffering, it was as near it as the infinite God could approach. It *was* suffering in the person of his Son. But think of this as we please, there is one who did suffer for us. If God could not suffer, the God-man could, and did. What suffering!

If, like another prodigal, you had received the portion of goods that fell to your share; had taken your journey into a far-off land; had there spent your substance whether in riot or misfortune; had lost all; were in debt—insolvently in debt; had broken the laws, and were cast into prison, whence there was no release until you had paid the uttermost farthing—money gone, hope gone, friends all distant—around you bolts, and bars, and chains, and the sounds of the lash, and the groans of the prisoner; and ever and anon the whip was mercilessly applied to your own body, ploughing up the flesh, and leaving it like the furrowed field, till you sunk in despairing agony—O what would you give for a friend; a friend who could relieve you! Suppose a brother hears of your sad estate in a distant land: he is happy in the society of his friends; his father's house affords him unfailing pleasures; he is wealthy; but what is this to him while a brother lies in a dungeon? He sells all, or rather gathers up his treasures, leaves his father's house—flies on the wings of the wind, hastens to the door of your cell, and says, "Let the prisoner go free, I will pay all his debts." "No," says the stern jailer, "it must not be—he has broken the law, and there he must lie, and be beaten with many stripes, unless some one will take his place and bear his punishment." "Open the door," says your brother, "I will be bound with his chain, I will lie in his dungeon, I will bear his chastisement, I will die his death! Open the door, and let the prisoner go free!" O had you such a friend! And have you not? Behold him! Lift up your eyes to heaven! He lays aside his crown. He strips off his royal robes. He comes down from the throne. He presses through shining ranks of adoring ministers. He passes the azure portals. He flies with lightning speed. Behind him is heaven with its glory; before him is earth with its shame. Behind him is the crown and the throne; before him is the manger and the cross. Behind him are the angels with their hosannas; before him are men with their curses. Still onward he flies. He has heard of thee, poor sinner, in thy dungeon—in thy darkness and blindness—and he comes to "proclaim deliverance to the captive, and the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound." Look up; thou hast found thy Friend at last! rather, he hath found thee—found thee "stripped, wounded, and beaten, and nigh unto death"—dying—dead. But his voice will bring thee to life; restore thee to health, to liberty, and to the glory of God. Alas that such a friend should have to die for me! Yet so it is. Without the shedding of his blood there can be no remission. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend." "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." And such a death! the death of the cross—shameful, painful, agonizing! He bare our sins in his own body on the tree. Who can refuse his claim? What is it? LOVE.

> "O! yield to love's resistless power,
> And fight against your God no more."

The man who returns ingratitude for kindness is the blackest of his race. Others may have a more sable skin, but he has the darkest heart. Common sinners shun his society; and the good account him a demon incarnate. Tell me, have you shown no ingratitude? Yes: and such ingratitude! and for such kindness! You have trampled, in your drunken revels, on the mangled body of the Friend who died for you. You have scorned the religion, and scoffed the name of the Saviour, whose hand keeps you every moment from dropping into hell! You have neglected his great salvation, and have crucified him afresh by your sins—

> "Pointed the nail, and fix'd the thorn."

If this suffering had been endured for an equal and a friend, it would have been accounted an exhibition of extraordinary love. If it had been endured for an inferior and a friend, it would have been greater still. But when we come to remember that it was endured for an inferior and an enemy, it is beyond comprehension. He died to make slaves to Satan his friends, to exalt them to his own glory, and seat them on his own throne. He shed his blood to redeem us, and he lives to advocate our cause. He arose for our justification. Notwithstanding all our base ingratitude he pleads our cause above. We would have been in hell long since if the Saviour had ceased to plead. Possibly, while we have been blaspheming his name on earth he has been interceding for us in heaven. Were he to drop our cause for a moment we would wake up in the torments of the damned. And are we still ungrateful? Do we still decline to love him? Yes; he is *hated* by us, while we are living in sin—while we refuse to submit ourselves to God.

Perhaps you are not convinced that you hate God—that you hate the Saviour. Try it by an infallible test. Do you love to converse with him? Do you love prayer?

If you saw two persons working together in the same shop, or the same field, both blessed with the faculty of speech, and delighting to converse with all others, but never conversing with each other, what would be your conclusion? That they loved each other? By no means; but the reverse. If you saw one person using every art to please another, and draw him into conversation, and the second person avoided his presence, and refused intercourse, what would you think? That the second person loved the first? Surely not. It is our pleasure to be in the society of those we love, and to converse with them. We love to speak to them, and to hear them speak. Prayer is speaking to God. Worship is coming into his presence, and waiting upon him—is listening to his voice. How long since some of us prayed? A year? It may be five or ten: possibly more. A few years ago, when that splendid meteoric shower occurred all over the country, a few old sinners huddled together affrighted, thinking that the great day of wrath was indeed come. "Pray for us," said one to the oldest man in the group. "Mercy on me," said he, "I cannot pray. I never prayed in my life." Did he love God? God was always present, and he could have spoken to him at any time. But he did not, because he did not love him. Indulge me in a parable:—

There was a wealthy and benevolent parent who had a son in whom he delighted. Everything was done for the youth, that could be done for him, to make him happy. The father doated on him; but the youth, as he grew up, manifested a strange, unnatural aversion to his father. He shunned his presence; would not speak to him when he could avoid it; fled at his approach, in terror and disgust. The fond father might be seen following him with tears in his eyes; calling to him; pleading with him; making the most encouraging promises; using every possible artifice of love to win his affections—still the son hated him, and shunned him. Only when he had plunged himself into difficulties, from which no one else could extricate him, would he reluctantly call upon his father. The father, glad of an opportunity to show his love, always relieved him: took him out of prison; bound up his wounds, gave him medicine, watched over him with tenderness, and restored him. Restored him to health; but, alas, not to love! No sooner was he able to go abroad, than his old feelings and habits returned. He still hated his father What should have been done with so ungrateful a child? Cast him out—disinherit him! He is not worthy of being the heir. Who is that undutiful, unnatural, ungrateful, hating and hateful child? Prayerless sinner, ask thy conscience. Thou art the man! God, thy father, has fed, clothed, sustained, and blessed thee. He has followed thee by day and by night, to win thy heart. He has spoken by his providence, his word, and his Spirit—as thou hast sat in thy house, as thou hast walked by the way, in the silence of thine own bedchamber, in the stillness of the night, his still small voice sounded in thine ears: "Hearken unto me; come unto me; call upon me, and I will answer." But you would not. Lo! these many years he has followed you, has been near you all the time; but you have not spoken. Yes; once or twice. When you were sick; when death stared you in the face; when the grave yawned; when hell opened—O! then you called upon him. He heard you; he healed you; he raised you up! How soon you forgot your Father and your vows! You have pronounced your own sentence. You must be cast out—disinherited—have no place among the children. The Lord grant you repentance; take away your desperately wicked heart—your stony heart—and give you a heart of flesh. That heart of yours hates God; you cannot deny it. It must be so, or you would love to pray.

We have said that man was created to glorify God; and that in showing forth his glory other beings were intended to be blessed through him. To know God is the chief good of man. So it is with other beings. Man is the workmanship of God; to exhibit his perfections; to declare his knowledge, power, and goodness. Every new exhibition of these attributes increases the sum of universal knowledge and happiness. God has a right to this use of his property; and man, refusing, betrays his trust, dishonors his God, and does him great injustice.

I am acquainted with a man who has spent, perhaps, the one-third part of the last twenty-one years in planning, constructing, and bringing to perfection, one piece of mechanism. It has cost him much money, and more labor; but the drudgery of thought was immense. He is an unlettered man, in moderate circumstances; but his genius is of a high order. This piece of mechanism is a chronometer. It is intended to indicate not only the hour of the day, and the minute of the hour, and the second of the minute, as in ordinary time-pieces; but also, if I remember rightly, the day of the week, the month, and the day of the month, the rising and setting of the sun, the rising and setting, and different phases, of the moon, &c. But besides all this, it has connected with it a planetarium, or representation of the solar system. All the primary planets are there, and some of the secondary; all in their appropriate orbits, and at their appropriate distances from the sun, and from each other; showing, also, the inclination of their orbits from the plane of the ecliptic; and each performing its revolutions in the regular time, as in nature: a wonderful work, should he ever finish it. If successful, it would enroll his name on the records of earthly glory.

Now, suppose this man is successful in completing his workmanship, and pronouncing his mechanism perfect, does, as is often done, employ some one in whom he reposes confidence, as his agent, to go forth, and exhibit his work to the world, that he may reap some reward for so many years of patient toil. He justly looks for praise and gain. The agent goes abroad. He is successful. The work is perfect. The world admires, and he is gathering treasure for his employer. This man of genius, we will suppose, has an enemy; one who has long sought to injure him. He seeks out the agent. By fair speeches he seduces him from his integrity. The agent consents that the enemy shall put his hand within the mechanism, and derange and break some important part of the work, which will be unnoticed by the spectator. It is done. The crowd gather together to see the new invention—the last wonder of the age. They are disappointed. It answers not to the description. It does not fulfill its design. There are plenty of wheels there, but they move not; or move too fast or too slow—irregularly; it is a failure in their estimation, and so they report it. It gets into the papers of the day, is pronounced a hoax—another of the humbugs of the times. The man of genius is defrauded. He suffers the grossest injustice. Men account him, probably, a fool and a knave, instead of an honor to his country, and a blessing to his race. What is the matter? Is not his workmanship there? Yes; but through perfidy it is hindered from fulfilling its design, and he loses his reward.

Man is fearfully and wonderfully made. He is both the machine and the agent who exhibits it. God made him in his own image, as if to show to the universe what he is, and what he can do. He pronounces him good, very good. The attendant angels shout with ecstasies over the last exhibition of their Creator's skill and power, and the morning stars dance in their spheres, and sing for joy. Man is sent forth to show himself to the universe, that all may glorify God in him. But the enemy finds him. By subtilty he beguiles him. He gets his marring hand within the works. He deranges them, and defaces the image of God. Man no longer fulfills his destiny. He is a failure through fraud. God made man perfect, but Satan, with man's consent, has marred the work; and, as that marred, deranged work, is now presented before the universe as God's work: it is disgracing him, it is pouring obloquy on his intelligence and goodness. There is enough in man to show what was intended, it may be, but he fulfills not his end. The wheels move not—or move too fast or too slow—they are out of order. We refer chiefly to his moral nature. But the derangement of this affects also his mental and physical powers. Man is ruined, and God is robbed. No wonder men, sometimes, in looking at themselves, and the derangement within them and about them, begin to question whether indeed they are the work of a wise and holy God, or of some inferior and imperfect being—possibly of a demon; or whether they have not sprung forth from some fortuitous confluence of atoms. In short, whether there be a God, or whether they came by chance. They are so disordered in their moral structure, that they cannot recognize themselves as the creatures of an infinitely perfect Creator. Man in his ruined state, standing forth professing himself as the work of God, is the grand humbug of time—a hoax on the universe, and a living, moving libel on the intellectual and moral character of Jehovah. As he is, he is not wholly the work of God. Satan has marred the handiwork, defaced the image of the Holy One, and placed his own in its stead, which he falsely exhibits as the representation of man's Creator.

O! perfidy, deep, black, and damning! The creature destroyed and the Creator dishonored! What can be done to remedy the evil? May the mechanism be repaired? Can it yet keep time in the service of its Maker? It may be; but not by man. Such a piece of work as the clock mentioned could not be put in order by everybody. It must go back to the inventor. Convince the agent of his sin, and get him to return, get it repaired, and start again. No other way will do. So with man. He must take himself back to God. He alone can regulate his passions, his will, his heart. He must be made over, so thorough is his ruin; and none but God, who made him, can remake him. He must be created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works. Only thus can he fulfill his destiny. Only thus can he glorify God. Only thus can he be happy, or make others happy.

Sinner, you are acting the part of that treacherous agent. Be sure your sin will find you out. Repent in time of your deeds of infamy. Cease to defraud, to rob, and dishonor your maker, God. Down with you in the dust at his feet—it becomes you—for hell scarcely contains a more hideous or guilty being. "Return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon you; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Pray to him, and he will *create* within you a clean heart, and *renew* within you a right spirit. "Submit yourselves, therefore, to God."

SERMON VIII.

Consecration to God.

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"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."—Romans xii, 1.

As a system of religious truth, Christianity is as much above all other religions as the heavens are higher than the earth—as God's thoughts and ways are above those of man. Well might the apostle, after unfolding some of these glorious truths in the preceding part of his epistle, overwhelmed with their importance and sublimity, exclaim, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" But Christianity is not a system of mere abstract doctrines. It teaches and enforces the purest morality, and the loftiest piety. Its doctrinal form of sound words is not more remarkable than its practical precepts, and exhortations to a holy life. Thus St. Paul, in this epistle, after closing his doctrinal discussion, proceeds to enforce the duties these doctrines are intended to inculcate, in a great variety of practical remarks; urging, with propriety, first of all, the duty of entire consecration to God. "*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*"

In speaking upon these words, I shall endeavor to explain the duty of consecration to God; show its reasonableness; and enforce the duty from a view of God's mercies. And may the Holy Spirit so apply the truth to our hearts, that we may all be led to render this reasonable service.

I. CONSECRATION TO GOD.

The language of the text is metaphorical. Allusion is made to the offering of sacrifices under the Mosaic dispensation. Now, as an offering when presented at the altar was regarded as sanctified, or set apart exclusively for the worship and service of God, so we are to consecrate ourselves to him, henceforth, not regarding ourselves as our own, but the Lord's. God made man for himself—to love and serve him. But, as a sinner, instead of living to God, he lives to himself. God does not, however, relinquish his claims, nor is man freed from his obligations. It is still his duty to serve God. Ceasing at once and for ever to walk in the ways of his own heart, and after the sight of his own eyes, he should make the will of God his only rule of life. He is under the most solemn obligations to glorify God in his body and spirit which are God's. Feeling that he is not his own, but the Lord's, instead of seeking his own pleasure, the language of his heart should continually be, "Lord, what wilt *thou* have me to do?" "Not as *I* will, but as *thou* wilt." Consecration to God is the denying of self, and yielding to God's claims. In this act we

> "Give up ourselves through Jesus' power,
> His name to glorify;"

solemnly promising that whether we live we will live unto the Lord, or whether we die we will die unto the Lord. There are several particulars, however, alluded to in the text respecting this duty, which it may be well to notice.

In the first place, it is represented as something *to be done by us*,—"present your bodies." The worshiper at the temple brought his own offering and presented it to the Lord, and this he did "voluntarily." In the work of his salvation, man must co-operate with God. There are duties which he must perform, there are conditions with which he must comply, or he cannot be saved. He must "work out his own salvation," or perish. True, he does nothing unaided: the Spirit helpeth his infirmities. Of himself he can do nothing, only as God works in him both to will and to do. But this gracious influence does not irresistibly force him to act, nor does it act for him. It simply enables him to do what is required, and furnishes him with motives to action. Thus aided, he must act for himself. Life and death are set before him, and it is for him to make the election, and upon this election depends his eternal happiness, or endless ruin. Not that he is saved by works, for after having done all, he is but an unprofit able servant. His salvation is entirely of grace, though conditional.

Consecrating himself to God is a part of what man is required to do. He must "break off his sins by righteousness, and his iniquities by turning unto the Lord;" "yielding his members as instruments of righteousness unto God." He himself must bring the sacrifice and lay it upon the altar. God will not do this for him. He will have a voluntary service or none. This may be a difficult work. It always is. The will bends reluctantly; self pleads persuasively; unbelief suggests a thousand fears; the great adversary, and all the influences which operate upon the soul in opposition to God, combine to prevent such a step. But it can be taken, and it *must* be taken. The will must yield, self must be denied, God must be trusted, the devil resisted, and the offering made.

But, secondly, this consecration should be *entire*. The whole of the beast, and of whatever was offered in the worship of the temple, was considered sacred; and to appropriate any part of it afterward to ordinary uses was regarded as sacrilege. In some cases all was consumed upon the altar; in others a portion went to the priest; but even this was "a thing most holy, an offering unto the Lord." So in the act of consecration, nothing should be kept back, everything should be given up to the Lord. The sentiment of the poet should be fully adopted:—

"Our souls and bodies we resign:
  With joy we render thee
Our all, no longer ours, but thine
  To all eternity."

Though in the text the body only is named, there can be no doubt but the entire person is intended. By a common figure a part is put for the whole. The soul, certainly, as well as the body, is to be consecrated to God. Nor should the consecration stop here. Time, property, influence, and "all that a man hath," should be given to the Lord. As this is a point of great practical importance, and one which, there is reason to fear, is not sufficiently regarded by most, I shall dwell upon it a little more at length.

No doubt the reason why many who profess to be penitent seekers of religion are not converted is, that they do not make an entire surrender of all to God. Self is allowed some little indulgence. There is some idol with which they are not willing to part—some secret bosom sin. Such persons may be deeply awakened, and have strong desires to become Christians. They may weep much, pray long, and struggle hard: for them prayer may be made without ceasing; but not denying themselves fully, they remain unforgiven. Some, deceiving themselves, charge God foolishly with an unwillingness to save them, and cease their efforts. Others yield to doubt respecting the reality of experimental religion; and question, perhaps, the truth of God. Falling into this snare of the devil, they become twofold more his children than before. While others, scarcely less fatally deceived, think to satisfy God with a partial sacrifice. They will consent to join the church, lead an outwardly moral life, attend to the external duties of religion, and contribute a little occasionally for religious and benevolent purposes. For the rest, the claims of self are fully allowed. And even in what they do professedly for God, they are actuated by motives purely selfish. They wish to escape the pains of hell, and secure the joys of heaven; and for this they are willing to make a compromise with the Almighty. Some of this class, "compassing themselves about with sparks, walking in the light of their own fire, and in the sparks they have kindled," may become very zealous in religion. But their zeal is selfish. They would persuade themselves and others that they are real Christians, though never born of God. They would count themselves heirs of heaven, though, in fact, children of the wicked one.

"Mistaken souls that dream of heaven,
And make their empty boast
Of inward joys, and sins forgiven,
While they are slaves to lust."

The religion of all such is vain. Indeed few are in a more hopeless state. Deceiving and being deceived. Of such God has said, "This shall ye have of my hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow." "Not every one," says Christ, "that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that *doeth the will of my Father* which is in heaven." Thus many fail of conversion, and fall into these dangerous errors, because of their unwillingness to serve God fully. They must reserve a part of the offering for themselves, and God will not, cannot, share it with them.

But though at conversion there is nothing knowingly kept back, still, as the soul is not then, at least usually, wholly sanctified, the spirit of selfishness soon manifests itself, in setting up claims in opposition to God. This is a point of peculiar interest and importance in the Christian's experience. If the claims of self are now uniformly resisted, if all is kept upon the altar of consecration, the young convert grows rapidly in the knowledge and experience of divine things. Advancing from one degree in grace to another, he soon attains to "the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus." Gaining strength in every act of self-denial, he becomes "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." Giving up his heart more and more fully to God, God fills it, until he is "filled with all the fullness of God." The candle of the Lord now shines brightly upon him; and he is enabled to "rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks." If, on the other hand, the claims of God are made to yield to those of self, the young Christian immediately suffers in his spiritual interests, and in a short time entirely backslides.

But most pursue an intermediate course. They yield more or less to self, while they maintain a general purpose to serve God. Some, yielding for the most part to the claims of God, become deeply pious. Though not entirely dead unto sin, they are ardently devoted to the interests of religion. In a great measure they are crucified to the world, and live as pilgrims and sojourners on earth. To glorify God, do good, and lay up treasure in heaven, is with them the chief concern of life. Others, following for the most part their selfish inclinations, have but little of the spirit of religion. For the glory of God and the salvation of souls they feel little anxiety. They are chiefly occupied with the world. They buy, and sell, and get gain, not so much that they may have the means of doing good, as that they may increase in wealth. They give but little, and that grudgingly. Their joys are few, and their faith weak. Even to themselves the manifestations of an inward, spiritual life, are scarcely discernible; and, from the world at large, they could hardly be distinguished by others, were they not occasionally seen in the assembly of the righteous, and at the communion table.

That the difference in the experience of Christians is to be attributed, in part, to difference of views or feelings with respect to the relative claims of religion and the world—of God and self—there can be no doubt. In theory most may be tolerably correct: the difference is chiefly in the practical sentiment, or application of the rule. Here many err greatly, and few, perhaps, are entirely free from error. What, then, is the extent of God's claims, or what is implied in entire consecration to him? (1.) The body must be consecrated to God. All its powers and susceptibilities are to be entirely at his disposal. They are to be developed and trained for his service. They must be exercised or restrained according to his will. No selfish indulgence in dress, sleep, or any of the appetites injurious to health, is compatible with entire consecration; while health, and even life itself, must be cheerfully sacrificed at the command of God. He who to preserve his health shrinks from the discharge of known duty, or to save his life denies his Saviour, shows that he has not given up *all* to the Lord. St. Paul counted not his life dear unto him, so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus. (2.) God claims the soul; not merely the religious or devotional sentiments, but *all* its powers. The will, reason, imagination, affections, passions—all should be consecrated to him. Self must be denied, all mental gratification even, which does not tend to his glory. His will must be the supreme law for the regulation of the thoughts and feelings. To think for God, to feel for God, and to speak for God, is incumbent on all, and is implied in the sacrifice enjoined in the text. (3.) Occupation and employment. *What* wilt thou have me to do? *Where* do it? *When* do it? and *how* do it? *I come to do thy will, O God.* This should be the language of every one; not in reference merely to what may be strictly called religious duties, but in reference to *all the affairs of life.* For whether we eat, or drink, or *whatsoever* we do, we are required to do all to the glory of God. None may choose his own profession, or calling, regardless of God's will. What God appoints he must do. Where God directs, there he must go. If called to the ministry, he must "obey the voice divine." If the providence of God points him to some heathen land as his appropriate field of labor, thither he must direct his steps. His own ease, convenience, pecuniary interest and aggrandizement, must yield to the claims of God. "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." (4.) Property. "Honor God with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase," is the divine requirement. And it is most reasonable, for "the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof;" the gold and the silver are his, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. Man has nothing but what he has received. He is but the steward of God's manifold mercies. What has been intrusted to him, he is to hold subject to the disposal of Him who is the giver of all. Thus we are to bring a *whole* offering unto the Lord. From his inmost soul, should each one say:—

"Take my soul and body's powers;
  Take my mem'ry, mind, and will;
All my goods, and all my hours,
  All I know, and all I feel;
All I think, or speak, or do;
Take my heart, but make it new.

"Now, my God, thine own I am,
  Now I give thee back thine own;
Freedom, friends, and health, and fame,
  Consecrate to thee alone:
Thine I live, thrice happy I!
Happier still, if thine I die."

But, thirdly, this is to be a "*living sacrifice.*" It was not permitted to bring a dead beast to be offered in sacrifice at the temple. This was strictly forbidden. It must be brought alive. In the former part of this epistle, the apostle exhorts his brethren to "yield themselves to God, as those who are alive from the dead." While in a state of nature, man is "dead in trespasses and sins," and until renewed he cannot do the will of God; for "the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The heart must be changed; old things must pass away, and all things become new, before man can serve God acceptably. To suppose that God will accept of any service which does not spring from a renewed heart is a fatal error. He expressly declares that the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to him. In consecrating ourselves to God, therefore, we are to seek for the renewing of our minds by the Holy Ghost. That we may serve him in newness of life, it is necessary that we experience a spiritual regeneration. We must pass from death unto life, being born again, not of the flesh but of the Spirit; putting off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and putting on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness. This is the "living sacrifice" which we are to offer, and which only will be accepted.

This expression also implies *activity.* A "living sacrafice" is an *active consecration.* And this is what the Bible everywhere enjoins. The Christian is called to a holy activity in the service of God. He is represented as a laborer in a vineyard; a soldier fighting manfully; as one running a race, and pressing hard toward the mark, that he may win the prize. This is not his rest. While here, he is to labor for God, cheerfully doing the work assigned him. His hands should never hang down, nor his arms be folded in slothful inactivity. The song of the sluggard he should never sing; but, with a burning zeal for God's glory, whatsoever his hand findeth to do, he should do with his might. Nor should he be deceived by any supposed necessity for inactivity, or retirement from the world for the cultivation of personal piety. The graces of the Spirit are best cultivated in the sphere in which God in his providence has placed us. Man was made for society, and in society he can the most successfully develop the Christian character. While discharging the duties he owes to God and the world, he may be growing in grace, and in the knowledge of the truth. True, he needs his seasons for retirement, but these will be afforded him in the ordinary providences of God, without his retiring to caves, or cloisters, or even so within himself as to be regardless of the interests of those around him. A "quieism," which excludes proper efforts for the promotion of the general interests of religion, is unfavorable to personal religion, and unauthorized by the word of God.

In the fourth place, it is required that the sacrifice be *holy.* The ceremonial law required that the beast to be offered should be "without blemish." This typified, primarily, the immaculate purity of Him who was made a sin-offering for the sins of the world. But it is alluded to in the text, to teach us that God requires truth in the inward parts; that to serve him acceptably the heart must be right: that in consecrating ourselves to him our motives must be pure; our principles of action according to his will.

Or allusion may be made to the impure worship offered to some of the heathen deities. Nothing could be more corrupting. The worshiper sunk deeper in depravity at every act of devotion. Many of those whom the apostle was addressing had worshiped at these shrines of pollution. But they were now devoted to the worship and service of the true God; and, in their devotions to him, no impure thought, word, or action, could be allowed. He must be worshiped in the beauty of holiness, and served in righteousness.

Lastly, this consecration should be made in *faith*. This is necessary to render it "*acceptable;*" for without faith it is impossible to please God. The sacrifices of the Jewish worship were typical. The slaughtered victim pointed the worshiper to the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." He, understanding the nature and design of these sacrifices, trusted not in his offering, as efficacious in itself, in propitiating the divine favor. He knew that is was "not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins," and that the sacrifices which were offered year by year, continually, could not make the comers thereunto perfect. He offered his sacrifice, therefore, in faith, looking to "the offering of the body of Jesus Christ," which, in due time, should be made "once for all." So must the offering up of ourselves to God be in faith. No "works of righteousness, which we have done," will render our offering acceptable. Even in the act of consecration, however full it may have been, we have only done that which it was our duty to do. For anything we have done, or can do, God might cast us off for ever. Our only hope is in his mercy in Christ Jesus. But if with unwavering confidence we rely upon that mercy, we shall be accepted. God will receive us graciously. He will adopt us into his family, and send forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

Thus are we, dear hearers, voluntarily, and without reserve, to consecrate ourselves to God; to serve him in newness of life, with sincere hearts, relying upon the meritorious death of Christ as our only ground of hope for acceptance with him.

Let us now notice

II. THE REASONABLENESS OF THIS CONSECRATION.

And, in the first place, I remark, that it is reasonable, because *it is only rendering back to God what properly belongs to him.* He has an undoubted right to our services, for we are his, and not our own. His by creation; for "he hath made us, and not we ourselves." His by preservation; for "in him we live, and move, and have our being." His by redemption; for "he hath bought us with a price." In virtue of these relations God claims us for his own. Nor is it possible for the mind to conceive of claims of higher authority. Each of these relations gives him an absolute right over us, and to withhold anything from him is robbery in the highest degree. Is the servant under obligations to do the will of the master, or the child to do the will of the parent? How much more we to do the will of God. To no other being in the creation can we sustain such important relations as we do to him; and consequently to no other can we be under as great obligations. What then more reasonable than that we should serve him; that we present to him "our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable?"

But this is a reasonable service also, inasmuch as *our own happiness requires it.* The constitution of our nature is such, that we cannot be truly happy while rebelling against God. He has set evil over against transgression: "Wo unto the wicked," is the unalterable decree, "it shall be *ill* with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him." Misery and sin are thus inseparably connected. As well might one think to take fire into his bosom, or walk upon hot coals and not be burned, as to continue in sin, and not suffer the evil consequences. There can be no abiding peace to the wicked—no satisfying joy. They may drink long and deep at the sparkling stream of sinful pleasure, and for a time count themselves happy, but "at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder." Their sweetest pleasures are turned into wormwood and gall: "For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture, and he poureth out of the same; but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall ring them out, and drink them." But "destruction stops not here—sin kills beyond the tomb." "The wicked shall be turned into hell," and upon them the Lord "shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup" for ever. But if the sinner turn from his evil way he shall live. Heaven waits to be gracious. He who with unfeigned repentance forsakes his sins, and in the exercise of a living faith consecrates himself to God, shall find mercy. And, accepted in the Beloved, he shall taste and see that the Lord is good. Continuing to walk obediently in God's ordinances and commandments, he shall "eat the good of the land." His will be a peace that passeth understanding, and a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. Assured that all things shall work together for his good, he fears no evil. Sustained and cheered by a good hope, through grace, he goes on his way rejoicing; and when called at last to pass the Jordan of death, with his foot upon the neck of his last enemy, he shouts victory! and ascends to the paradise of God, there eternally to dwell amid the resplendent glories of the heavenly state. So true is it, that our happiness here and hereafter depends upon the performance of the duty enjoined in the text.

Again, consecration to God is reasonable, because *upon it depends our usefulness in the world.* It is our duty to do good to all as we have opportunity. We are not to look every man on his own things only, but also on the things of others. Their interests are to be regarded, and their well-being sought. The relations we sustain make this the imperative duty of all. And such is the connection which links us one to the other, that, of necessity, we are continually exerting an influence, for good or for evil, upon those among whom we move. We cannot wholly insulate ourselves in society if we would, nor determine the limit of our influence. Now, the happiness of others, like our own, depends upon submission to God. If they continue in rebellion, they must perish. The vials of God's wrath will be poured out upon them. But if they turn to God, they will secure his favor and eternal life. Whether they do so or not will depend, in part at least, upon the influence we exert over them. We may be unwilling to bear this responsibility; but it cannot be thrown off. We may disclaim any wish or intention to injure them; we may even advise them not to follow our example: but our actions will speak louder than our words; and so long as we continue in sin, we shall be instrumental in confirming them in their impenitency. It is a fearful fact, that men do not go single handed in the way to death. Hand is joined to hand. Sinners lead each other down the steeps of perdition. The parent leads the child; the husband the wife, and the wife the husband; friend leads friend, and neighbor, neighbor.

On the other hand, he who consecrates himself to the service of God, exerts an influence which tends to lead others to Christ. How many children owe their conversion, under God, to the influence of parental example! How often has the Christian temper and manly piety of the husband led the unbelieving wife to the foot of the cross, or the consistent life and pious conversation of the wife won the ungodly husband! And so in all the relations of life. If devoted to God, our influence will be salutary; if not, it must be evil. True, we may do much for the temporal interests of those around us, though unconverted; but what is that, so long as our example tends to drown their souls in perdition? How reasonable, then, is this service! It is but discharging a duty all owe to God, themselves, and the world. And who will withhold it? Who will act so unreasonable a part? The poet represents the lost as ever exclaiming, "We knew our duty, but we did it not." O bitter ingredient in the cup of wo! Are there any here who are thus trifling with the claims of God and their own interests? If so, I beseech you give me your serious attention, while I endeavor—not to alarm you by the terrors of the law, though you may well tremble in view of your danger—but to

III. ENFORCE THE DUTY OF CONSECRATION TO GOD FROM A VIEW OF HIS MERCIES.

And, first, I address myself to the *careless* sinner. You refuse to serve God. He calls, but you will not hear; he stretches out his hand, but you will not regard it; you set at naught all his counsels, and refuse to turn at his reproof. Practically you are saying, "What is the Almighty that we should serve him, and what profit should we have if we pray unto him?" And who *is* he whom you so obstinately refuse to obey—to whose authority you will not submit? What is his character? Is he cruel and implacable? And how has he treated you? Has he withheld all good, and conferred only evil? O no! he is *the God of love*, and he has done you good, and not evil, all your days. From him you have received existence, and everything that renders existence desirable. All the blessings of life which you enjoy are the gift of his hand. The air you breathe, the water you drink, the food you eat, the clothing you wear, your "friends and safe abode;" for all these, and *every* temporal good, you are indebted to Him, whom you most unreasonably refuse to serve. This is not all; it is comparatively nothing. He has not withheld his Son, his only-begotten, his well-beloved Son, but has given him to die for *you*. O matchless love! O condescending grace! And *yet* you rebel against him; and yet he spares you. You reject his mercy, and he waits to be gracious still. You abuse his goodness, and he continues to pour upon you blessings more than you can number. O sinner, can you longer resist his grace? Shall not his goodness lead you to repentance? Will you live upon his bounties, and still live but to sin against him? By his great mercy to you, I beseech you cease your rebellion—give yourself to him in a perpetual covenant, never to be forgotten.

"Bow to the sceptre of his word,
Renouncing every sin;
Submit to him, your gracious Lord,
And learn his will divine."

I would next address the *halting* sinner. You acknowledge God's claims upon you. You know and feel that it is your duty to serve him. Almost persuaded to be a Christian, and yet you hesitate. In your breast a mighty conflict is going on between the powers of light and darkness, and with you is the fearful responsibility of determining which shall prevail. If you yield to the suggestions of the wicked one, he will lead you captive at his will; but if you yield to the Spirit of God, he will lead you into paths of righteousness and salvation. And why should you hesitate? Can you think of continuing a slave of the devil, who in the malevolence of his heart desires to make you miserable for ever—to drag you down to the regions of endless wo, and there to vex and torment you eternally? O will you not rather trust yourself in the hands of your merciful Creator? He promises the rich consolation of his grace here, and eternal life hereafter. Why not yield this very hour? Why not decide the doubtful question even *now?* Think of God's mercy toward you. How has he surrounded you with blessings! How has his Spirit always been striving with you! And though you have often quenched his influences, and driven him from your heart, yet has he returned again and again. And now once more he comes and convinces you of sin, of righteousness, and of a judgment to come. He presses upon you the offers of salvation. It would seem as if God, by his long-suffering and forbearing mercy toward you, was saying, "How shall I give thee up?" O, by this exhibition of his mercy, I beseech you resist his grace no longer. With a relenting heart cry out,—

"I yield, I yield,
I can hold out no more;
I sink, by dying love compell'd,
And own thee conqueror."

And is there a true *penitent* here—a sincere seeker of religion? And what hinders you from bringing your sacrifice and laying it upon the altar? Does unbelief suggest that the offering will not be accepted? that God's mercy cannot reach your case? Then come and stand awhile with me beneath the cross. There hangs God's only Son. Behold his hands, his feet, his pierced side! See how his enemies mock and revile him! Read the agony of his soul in his groans and sighs, and in the bitter exclamation, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Why all this suffering? What means that streaming blood, that agonizing groan? Penitent sinner, he suffers this for *thee.* In his own body he is bearing *thy* sins. Upon him is *thine* iniquity laid. *Doubt no more.* Fall into the hands of God, trusting in his mercy, and "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

But what shall I say to the *unconverted professor* and *dead backslider,* who are trying to serve God and Mammon? Remember that God cannot be deceived, and that he will not be mocked. He requires a "living sacrifice," and you are presumptuously offering him a *lifeless* one. Your cold and heartless service is but a vain oblation, which he abhors. You are insulting him to his face, and yet his wrath delays. For you then, even, there is hope. His mercy is not "clean gone for ever." By that mercy, I beseech you, repent, and give your hearts to God. Seek earnestly his converting grace, that you may serve him in newness of life, and serve him acceptably.

And now, *beloved brethren*, I beseech *you*, suffer the word of exhortation. You have already presented yourselves as a sacrifice to God, and have, I trust, found acceptance with him. But permit me to inquire whether you have made an *entire* offering, and whether all is *now* upon the altar? Are you living *wholly* unto the Lord? Do you regard yourselves, and all you have, as his; and do you hold all entirely at his disposal? Are you ready to go and labor in any domestic and foreign field to which he may call you? Or should your children be called, could you cheerfully give them up? Are you prepared to lay even your Isaac, your only son, whom you love, upon the missionary altar? And is it in your heart to give freely of your substance, as the Lord has need of it? Alas! how often when flocks and herds multiply, and silver and gold are increased, is the heart lifted up, and God, who giveth power to get wealth, forgotten! "My power, and the might of my hand, hath gotten me this wealth;" and "is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" is, I fear, the sentiment, if not the very language, of too many who profess to be Christians. The love of wealth is the crying sin of the church. Brethren, beware. Remember that your property is a talent from the Lord. It is his, and not your own. You are permitted to occupy until the Master comes; but if you would escape the charge of having squandered his substance, you must regard his will in its use. But in your case, your possessions are his also by sacrifice. You profess to have laid all upon his altar. See that you do not add to the sin of robbery that of sacrilege. And is there *no* idol which you serve? Do you make *no* reservation for self? Are you constantly acting under the sentiment, *all for God?*

And are you offering God a "living sacrifice?" Are you *actively* engaged in doing his will? There is always enough to be done. In addition to the work of personal salvation, the poor are to be relieved; the sick and those in prison are to be visited, and the fatherless and widows in their afflictions; the ignorant are to be instructed, the careless warned, the penitent pointed to Christ, and believers encouraged and built up. But at the present time there appears to be a special call for Christian effort. With reference to our own country, we may truly say, "a great door, and effectual, is opened," for the spread of evangelical religion; but it is also true that "there are many adversaries." Political excitement, inordinate love of distinction, and thirst for wealth, are serious obstacles to the extension of true piety. Catholicism is beginning to exert a mighty influence in opposition to the faith once delivered to the saints. Infidelity, having stolen "the livery of heaven to serve the devil in," is creeping, like "a wolf in sheep's clothing," among the folds, seeking to devour.

But the call for Christian effort comes up from other lands. There is a movement favorable to the introduction of Christianity among the nations; silent it may be, but extensive. The increasing facilities in traveling and commercial intercourse are bringing distant nations into almost immediate contact; the light of science is extending; the heathen, by millions, are renouncing idolatry, and, unless speedily instructed in the truth as it is in Jesus, will settle down into a blind infidelity, or be beguiled into a false faith and corrupt worship by emissaries of the Roman Church. What, however, is being done to meet these calls? Much, compared with former efforts, and enough to show that it is a work especially owned and blessed of God; but little compared with what should be. What might not the church accomplish, by the blessing of Heaven, were all her resources consecrated to the work of filling the earth with the knowledge of God? And what an enterprise! How should every Christian's heart beat with a high and holy purpose to aid in carrying it forward; and, yet, how many appear to feel little or no interest in the subject! The Macedonian cry, as it comes up from all parts of the earth, is waxing louder and louder; but, alas! upon how many ears does it fall almost as deaf as the leaden ear of death! Have the lovers of Jesus forgotten his last command, "Go ye into all the world, and preach my gospel to every creature?" If not, why are so few heard saying, "Here am I; send me;" or, Here is my property, use it for the spread of the gospel? It is for the want of the spirit of entire and active consecration to God. This spirit must become more general in the church before the world is converted. But, brethren, I would hope better things of you, though I thus speak. And yet I would say to all, examine yourselves; consider the extent of God's claims and of your obligations. See if you are meeting them *fully*. And should you, upon careful examination, find that you are offering God but a partial sacrifice, I beseech you, by his great mercy toward you, bring all this very hour and lay it at the Saviour's feet. Freely have you received—freely give.

One thought more, and I close. Many of you have long been praying for the blessing of a clean heart, or perfect love. But as yet your prayers have not been fully answered. You are still crying, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" You wonder, perhaps, why the desire of your heart is not granted you. May you not have failed in presenting your offering? Have you not brought the halt, or maimed, to the altar, or kept back some part of what belongs to the Lord? Have you not yielded at some point to the claims of self? True, the blessing of sanctification, as well as of justification, is *received* by faith alone. But faith always supposes repentance, and true repentance implies consecration. May not the weakness of your faith be attributed, in part at least, to the imperfection of your repentance? Bring, then, a *whole* offering unto the Lord, and prove him herewith, and see "if he will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar," and look for the fire of God's love to descend and consume it, making an end of self-will, and "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

And now unto Him whose we are, and whom we serve, be praise for ever. Amen.

SERMON IX.

Christian Perfection.

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"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."—Matt. v, 48.

THESE, my brethren, are the words of Jesus Christ, in his justly celebrated Sermon on the Mount. His previous discourses and miracles, together with the sanctity of his personal character, had so interested the public mind, that multitudes from all parts flocked around him to hear the words of eternal life. Seeing these multitudes as sheep without a shepherd, and feeling his bowels of compassion melt in love toward them, he ascended a mountain—the better to be seen and heard by them all—and there delivered the sermon comprised in the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of this Gospel. The words of the text form the conclusion of what he had said in the fifth chapter, and contain the practical improvement of the first part of this incomparable sermon. Viewed in this light, the solemn command contained in the text stands intimately connected with every part of the preceding discourse; and clearly shows that perfection in the Christian character was the grand end of all these divine communications. The pattern of this perfection, showed us in the mount, was the divine character itself. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." God is the inexhaustible fountain of all desirable goodness and adorable perfections. To be perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect, is indeed impossible as to quality or extent, but not as to imitation. As God is perfect in all the qualities of *his* nature, and in all his adorable attributes; so we, as the subjects of redeeming and saving mercy, may be so "renewed in righteousness and true holiness," as to bear a striking resemblance to him in moral and spiritual perfection. As far as we can discover, it would have been inconsistent for God to have required anything short of this.

Accordingly he says, "Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy." "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." To which we may add the language of the text—"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." These claims of God are holy, just, and good.

But to have required this state of perfection of the posterity of Adam, while they bore no active part in producing the fallen condition of the race, without making provision for their restoration to the lost favor and image of God—though it might have been just, as the law is unchangeable—yet it would have been unavailing in our behalf; for, by the fall, we not only lost all *disposition*, but also all *power*, to do that which is pleasing and acceptable to God. This was our state by the fall. "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost."

If we consider fallen man abstractly from the great atonement, and from all the provisions of the gospel; or under this great economy, but in an unreconciled state, we may well say, that "there is no man that liveth and sinneth not;" "that if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us;" or, "if we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." But in view of this great provision—the all-atoning sacrifice—we are informed that "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to *cleanse us from all unrighteousness*." It is in view of this great provision of the gospel that we are commanded to "cleanse ourselves from *all* filthiness of the flesh and spirit, *perfecting holiness* in the fear of God."

Notwithstanding the Scriptures everywhere abound with this important doctrine, yet very diverse are the views of Christians as to the nature and attainableness of entire sanctification in the present life. But inasmuch as "without holiness no man shall see the Lord;" and as holiness of heart and life stands intimately connected with the glory of God, our present peace and usefulness, as well as with our eternal state, should we not be well satisfied as to the nature and truth of this important doctrine? And above all, should we not be well assured of a personal interest in this great salvation? Let us, then, consider—

I. THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE PERFECTION REQUIRED OF US IN THE WORD OF GOD, AND OFFER SOME PROOFS OF THE TRUTH OF THE DOCTRINE. And

II. POINT OUT THE WAY BY WHICH THIS GREAT BLESSING MAY BE OBTAINED.

I. *Its nature, extent, &c.*

The term perfect signifies "finished; complete; not defective; having all that is requisite to its nature and kind; complete in moral excellences." But the term, in the evangelical sense, is used to express that matured state of personal holiness which God requires of us, and which the gospel promises to us. This state, in the Scriptures, is denominated the being "sanctified thoughout, spirit, soul, and body;" and being "preserved *blameless* unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; "the being "perfected in love;" the being "perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect." But we are not to understand by this the perfection of Adam in paradise. That degree of perfection enjoyed and exercised by man prior to the introduction of sin to our world, cannot be attained by any of his fallen posterity in the present life.

But if our moral natures may be so "renewed after the image of Him that created us," as to be "sanctified throughout, spirit, soul, and body, and be preserved *blameless* unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," why, it may be demanded, may we not expect to be made as perfect in all respects in this life as Adam was in paradise? We answer, for the following reasons:—The fall entailed upon the posterity of Adam certain disabilities, which it does not please God to remove when we are renewed in righteousness and true holiness. Some of these disabilities are mental; as ignorance, weakness, and error of judgment. These, in many respects, and in relation to many things, are not entirely removed in the present life, even in the most holy persons. Others of these disabilities are physical: such as weakness, disease, decay, and death of the body. These dreadful evidences of the original curse remain, and have been exemplified in the painful experience of the most holy men who have ever lived upon the earth.

and although a perfect deliverance from all these is secured, prospectively, by a future and glorious resurrection from the dead, yet in these respects, even if saved from all sin, we must, during this life, fall far short of the perfection of paradise. To these were we to add a long catalogue of *moral* defects, in thought, word, and deed, it would only be what exists in fact with the great proportion of professing Christians. But, in these remarks, it is not so much our duty to set forth what is in fact the moral condition of professing Christians, as to exhibit what, in the word of God, we are commanded to be; and what, by the grace of God, we may be. And, least of all, are we permitted to hold up the dwarfish and imperfect experience of the great body of professors, as the evidence of the Bible doctrine on this great subject. The question, then, returns upon us—and which we come now to consider—What is the nature and extent of the perfection taught in the word of God as the privilege of his people?

It is a perfect deliverance from the guilt of sin. Every act of God is perfect, whether it regard any work of his as a whole, or in its progressive degrees. Hence pardon of sin is a perfect work in its kind and degree. Whenever God absolves a sinner from his sins, and reconciles him to himself, they are all pardoned and removed as far from him as the east is from the west. But when we say all sin, we mean all *past* sin; for it cannot be rationally supposed that any sin which a man may commit subsequently to his conversion, is at all involved in the question of his justification. Hence Jesus Christ is set forth "a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins *that are past.*" We mention this important and early step in the progress of human salvation in connection with this subject, not only because it is in itself a perfect work, but also because of its important bearing upon every succeeding step of this salvation.

Inseparably connected with this, as to *time*, is that glorious manifestation of God to the soul of the pardoned sinner, which, at the same time that it witnesses and seals his pardon, so changes the moral dispositions of his heart as to constitute him a "new creature in Christ Jesus." The love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him. This work is also perfect in its degree. The will, for the time being, is wholly subjected to the will of God. The affections being thus changed in their moral nature, are also changed in their direction, and are now wholly placed on things above. The passions, for the time being, are wholly under the control of this gracious influence, so that the individual feels, for a time, nothing contrary to love either toward God or any man. To one in this state of mind, everything in the moral kingdom appears new and beautiful. God, the law of God, the gospel of God, the people of God, the service of God; all are new and glorious. This is the blade, and it is a perfect blade; nay, it is the ear; but not the "*full corn* in the ear." This is a "babe in Christ," and a perfect babe in Christ: but not the "fullness of the stature of a *perfect man* in Christ." This is justification by faith, and the witness of the Holy Ghost that such a change in our relations to God and his law has taken place; and many are the blessed fruits which follow this great work. This important work has often been confounded with entire sanctification; and not unfrequently mistaken for that great work itself. But although it partakes of its nature, yet it is only as a child partakes of the nature of a man, but remains a child still. But what further than this, it may be asked, may we look for in the present life? Blessed be God, we may look for the full growth and maturity of every Christian grace. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Let us notice in a few particulars.

First. This state of Christian perfection consists in a *matured faith*, such a faith in the truth of God's word as admits of no doubt; such a faith in the promises of God as staggers not through unbelief, but is strong, giving glory to God; such a faith as relies upon the atoning sacrifice of Christ, as the only consideration on account of which salvation may be expected or asked for; such a faith as not only embraces the promises, but claims and receives the fulfillment of them in the present salvation of the soul; such a faith as not only rests satisfied that the dispensations of divine Providence are all right, but one that enables its possessor to dismiss all anxious care concerning the future. With this faith firmly fixed in the soul, even in view of death itself, there is no distressing anxiety. At the hour of justification this principle is in exercise, but is then like the trembling hand of the beggar stretched forth to *receive* a donation; but in its matured state, it is the strong hand of confidence that *lays hold* on eternal life; and is our victory that overcometh the world. It is that matured spiritual vision, which sees every spiritual object within its range distinctly, and is the satisfactory evidence of things not seen by mortal eye. In a word, it is that faith which works by love and purifies the heart.

Secondly. It is the perfection of our *love* to God and all mankind.

There are two important branches to the work of perfecting the soul in Christian experience. The first consists in the removal of all guilt and moral pollution, by the pardoning mercy of God, and the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit; and the second, in filling the heart, thus emptied of sin, with the perfect love of God in Christ Jesus.

There are, doubtless, degrees in the exercise of love, as in that of faith. Hence John observes, "He that feareth is not made perfect in love."—"Perfect love casteth out fear." But the divine command is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and thy neighbor as thyself." "Upon these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Nothing short of this is required; but when this perfect love of God and man is exercised, the utmost demands of the law, as to moral obedience, are met and answered; for "love is the *fulfilling* of the law." "He that loveth another *hath fulfilled* the law." Do you ask, with Nicodemus, "How can these things be?" We answer, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from *all* unrighteousness." "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from *all* sin." "He that is born of God sinneth *not*, but keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." "I can do all things," saith an apostle, "through Christ who strengtheneth me."

Thus, though we have neither merit nor strength of our own, yet when the perfect love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost given unto us, we are enabled to "do his commandments." And, blessed be God, "his commandments are not grievous." "His yoke is easy, and his burden is light." God is the supreme object of his delight and happiness, the source of his comfort and place of his rest. He need not retire into solitude, nor mingle in the society of the fashionable world to find happiness. He need not pursue worldly pleasure, wealth, or fame, to find rest and peace to his soul—no, his happiness is based upon a broader and firmer foundation.

"While bless'd with a sense of his love,
A palace a toy would appear;
And prisons would palaces prove,
If Jesus would dwell with me there."

And he who loves God with all his heart, will also love his neighbor as himself. His neighbor, being a part of himself, claims and shares a deep and lively interest in his affections; and when his neighbor is, with him, raised to be a partaker of like precious faith, it greatly enhances the felicity of both.

But this love is by no means confined to the household of faith. Were it so, what would Christians do more than others? If we examine the context, we shall find that our blessed Lord places the loving of our enemies among the highest attainments of the Christian character. "But I say unto you, Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good; and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so?" and then adds the words of the text,—"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

Thus we see that to love our enemies forms an essential branch of Christian perfection. This is one of the most important, and yet difficult duties of the Christian life, and utterly impracticable to those whose hearts are not perfected in love; but with the heart renewed and filled with love, this, and every other duty, is easy and pleasant. And herein the Christian religion transcends all others. It may safely challenge all others, to produce from human kind a single individual, who is not only devoid of every species and degree of the spirit of revenge; but one who most tenderly pities, blesses, and prays for his bitterest enemies! But this, every genuine Christian does with all his heart. If in anything we are godlike, it is in the exercise of love to our enemies. He, as the God of providence, "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good;" and "sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust;" and as the God of grace, he "hath so loved the world," even the world of lost sinners, "that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And that Son of God "commended his love toward us, in that while we were yet enemies he died for us," and when dying, said, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." And how truly godlike did Stephen appear when he said, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!"

But how could a fallen sinner be so saved as thus to feel, and thus to pray for his murderous enemies? Stephen was a perfect Christian—perfect as his Father in heaven was perfect. It is said of him that he was "full of the Holy Ghost." This answers all questions. He could do all things through the power of the Holy Ghost. There is, then, no greater evidence that we are Christians, than that we feel and exercise this godlike disposition. But he who feels envy, malice, or a disposition to revenge himself, is not made perfect in love: for perfect love casteth out all these. But, perhaps, it may be said, If this be true Christianity, where live the Christians? Nay, but do you deny that this is true Christianity? If not, then we are so far right. We are right in opinion. We are on the Bible foundation, at least in theory. But suppose—what, however, I do not admit—that there never were any who came up to this standard of Christian holiness, would this prove the doctrine itself false? Certainly not. We trust, however, that there have been thousands and tens of thousands, both before and since the days of Stephen, who have exhibited the same true marks of Christian perfection which characterized him. This is, indeed, the most distinguishing characteristic of the Christian religion. Whatever else we have, whether of natural parts, or of acquired abilities, of amiableness of disposition, or accomplishment of manners, yet if we are destitute of love to God and man, our enemies not excepted, our religion is but an empty sound; the form without the power; the shadow without the substance.

Thirdly. It is the perfection of our souls in humility.

Pride is a sin against both tables of the law. It acts against God in a wicked, though vain, desire to be independent of him, and in opposition to his established method of saving sinners. It swells a haughty worm to a high conceit that he is, intrinsically and comparatively, far above his fellow-creatures; and, what is most base of all, it renders him willing and desirous to be thought by others what he is conscious he is not. Now perfect humility is the reverse of all this. It leads a man to feel, to acknowledge, and to acquiesce in, his entire dependence on God, without the least infelicity of mind on this account. It leads him cordially to embrace salvation in God's own way, notwithstanding while that way exalts the Saviour, it robs the sinner of all grounds of boasting, and casts him into the dust of self-abasement at the feet of Jesus. It leads him to think no more highly of himself than he ought to think; and to assume no intrinsic worth of character, on account of the providential circumstances of birth, friends, wealth, learning, influence, beauty, dress, or the like. Above all, perfect humility saves a man from any desire to appear to others what he knows he is not. This is humility; and he who possesses this grace in its perfection, possesses one of the greatest safe-guards, as well as ornaments, of the Christian character.

Fourthly. It is the perfection of the soul in meekness.

Meekness stands opposed to anger, wrath, and clamor. It is the quietus of the soul, under the influence of the perfect love of God. Not only does it "lay the rough paths of peevish nature even," but also arms the soul against all the assaults and fiery darts of the wicked. It is prepared not to resist evil, but to bear insult and fraud without anger or retaliation. It stands aloof from the noisy clamors of this world, about rights of priority, satisfaction for real or supposed injuries, and from strife and contention of every description. If smitten on the one cheek, it quietly and patiently turns the other. If sued at the law and the coat be taken, it quietly lets the cloak go also, rather than do wrong, or manifest a bad spirit. Indeed, freedom from angry passions, words, and actions, is among the highest attainments, as well as greatest ornaments, of the Christian character. He who is free in these things, is free indeed.

"What! never speak one evil word?
Or rash, or idle, or unkind?
O how shall I, most gracious Lord,
This mark of true perfection find?"

Finally. This perfection consists in being wholly resigned to all the dispensations of divine Providence.

This state of mind is most beautifully and comprehensively set forth by the apostle where he says, "Rejoice evermore, and in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." By being resigned, however, is not meant that there is no feeling under the pressure of afflictions and disappointments. There is, doubtless, such a thing as having little or no feeling under the various afflictions of the present life, arising from ignorance, or a sort of morbid insensibility of mind, but this is not resignation. Doubtless there are many who think themselves, and are thought by others, to be very much resigned to the will of God, when, in fact, it is nothing but a natural or acquired insensibility, by which they appear to be what they are not. To such, resignation is, at most, but a negative virtue. Neither is it the mere feeling of acquiescence in the dispensations of the divine will, when that will is in perfect accordance with our own wishes. There is no great virtue in being satisfied when all our wishes are gratified. A man once said, that when walking through his fields of corn, and observing the large and plentiful ears, he was so overcome with a sense of the goodness of God, that he was constrained to fall down upon his knees, and, with flowing tears, give thanks for the bounties of Providence. This was all very well. But another man said, in the year 1816, when the corn was nearly all cut off by the cold season, that "corn was big enough that year for Christians!" and no one who knew him doubted that he felt what he said. This is the true character of Christian resignation. Let the understanding be well enlightened, and the mind tenderly alive to all its interests; then let these interests be touched in the tenderest parts; let property mount the wings of fire, or be borne away on the bosom of the flood; let fell disease enter his dwelling, and ruthless death break up the dearest family circle; let all earthly hopes be blasted, and then it is that his resignation is put to the test. Then, if he stand, his strength is not small. Then he will be heard to say, "Good is the will of the Lord." "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

Nothing, however, short of entire sanctification can produce this happy state of mind. But the possession of this great salvation will serve as a ballast to the soul, which will enable it safely to ride out all the storms of life, and to land safe on that eternal shore.

Thus we see what the Bible teaches on the subject of Christian perfection. And if the chapter from which the text has been selected be examined, it is believed that all these points will be found, directly or indirectly, set forth therein by our Saviour himself. *There* are the poor in spirit, whose is the kingdom of heaven. *There* are they that mourn, and are comforted. *There* are the meek, inheriting the earth. *There* are those who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, and *are filled*. *There* are the merciful, obtaining mercy; the *pure in heart*, who shall see God; the peacemakers, who are called the children of God. *There* are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, whose is the kingdom of heaven—rejoicing and being exceedingly glad in the midst of all manner of *false* accusations for Christ's sake.

There are they who are the salt of the earth, the lights of the world, the city on the hill, the candle on the candlestick. *There* are they who do, and teach others to do, the least of the commandments. *There* are set forth those whose righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, and, therefore, *shall* enter into the kingdom of heaven. *There* are those free from all sinful anger, and rash and reproachful speeches; using all possible means to be reconciled to an offended brother. *There* are those whose very eyes, as well as hearts, are clean from the pollutions of adultery; having crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts, by plucking out right eyes, and cutting off right hands. *There* are those saved from all rash swearing, and from every irreverent use of the name, attributes, or works of God; those free from every species and degree of the spirit of retaliation; quiet under repeated insults and wrongs; possessed of a charitable and benevolent heart; full of neighborly kindness; and last, though not least, love to their bitterest enemies.

Now, let this assemblage of Christian graces and virtues be found existing in and actuating any human being, and he is, in our Lord's sense of the term, perfect, even as our Father in heaven is perfect. But if any be disposed still to doubt, let him answer this question to his own conscience:—Which of the graces, above enumerated, can be dispensed with, and we still be prepared for heaven?

Now, that the doctrine above stated is true, we prove from the following considerations.

First. God has commanded us to be holy. Hear a few of his commands touching this point:—"Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God." "Ye shall be holy, for I am holy." "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself." "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Here is both the evidence of what we may be, namely, holy in heart and life, and the command so to be.

Secondly. The promises of God are so many evidences of the truth of this doctrine. "The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." "In that day there shall be a fountain opened in the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." And in view of this fountain, he says, by the mouth of Ezekiel, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them."

To these agree the words of John:—"If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son *cleanseth us from all sin.*" "His name shall be called Jesus, for he shall save his people *from* their sins." "To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he sware to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in *holiness* and *righteousness* before him *all the days of our life.*" These promises of God, with many more which might be adduced, are all "yea, and in him, amen, unto the glory of God." Who, then, can doubt the possibility of being made holy—of being saved from all sin in this life — after reading these exceeding great and precious promises from the lips of eternal truth and faithfulness?

Thirdly. This doctrine is proved by the inspired prayers which have been offered up for this great blessing.

But before we proceed to notice those which are properly denominated inspired prayers, let us notice one or two offered by the Saviour himself for the same thing:—"I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst *keep them from the evil.*" "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made *perfect in one.*"

These prayers were offered up by one who said, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me; and I know that thou hearest me *always.*"

Now for the prayers of inspired men for full salvation:— "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be *preserved blameless* unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also *will do it.*" Will do what? Why, sanctify you *wholly*, spirit, soul, and body, and preserve you *blameless.* "Now I pray to God that ye do *no evil;* and this also we wish, even your perfection." But, perhaps, the most comprehensive of all the inspired prayers, is that offered by St. Paul for the Ephesians. And let it be remembered, that full salvation is the special object of this apostolic prayer. "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the *breadth*, and *length*, and *depth*, and *height*, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be *filled with all the fullness of God*. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us; unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." No one will doubt that this is a prayer for holiness—for Christian perfection. And who will doubt that this inspired prayer comprehends also the *measure* of that holiness which may be expected in the present life?

Now, can it be believed that God would inspire holy men to pray in this manner for a state of holiness which, at the same time, it was utterly impossible to attain unto? It cannot be. The very fact of his inspiring men thus to pray, proves that the blessing is for the church.

Fourthly. This doctrine is proved by the testimony of God concerning many of his saints.

Passing over the case of Abel, who, by obedient faith, "obtained witness that he was righteous," let us notice the case of Enoch. Of him the Holy Ghost bears testimony, that he "walked with God three hundred years;" and that "by faith he was translated, that he should not see death, for, before his translation, he had this testimony, that he *pleased* God." Here is a fallen sinner, brought nigh by the blood of the covenant, and walking with God, in holiness and righteousness, in such a manner as to be pleasing in his sight, for the space of three hundred years, and that, too, in a very dark age, in the midst of a very wicked generation, and with very few helps!

Noah, also, is pronounced, by the Holy Ghost, to have been "a just man, and perfect in his generations:" and one that "walked with God." Nor is the solitary instance of error mentioned of him to invalidate the testimony of God concerning his general character; for, if viewed in its worst light, it only proves the possibility of falling from the highest state of grace. But from the circumstances of the case, and from the absence of all evidence that it was ever repeated, we may well doubt whether, in that instance, any moral turpitude attached to the act in the sight of God.

Caleb and Joshua are declared, by the spirit of inspiration, to have had "another spirit with them," and to have "*followed the Lord fully.*" Moses, who had been long and intimately acquainted with these men, bore this noble testimony to the holiness of their characters, and at the very time, too, at which he acknowledges those very imperfections by which he was himself denied the privilege of entering the promised land. Samuel the prophet, and John the Baptist, were both bright examples of this faith; the latter, especially, "being filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb." And the Holy Ghost testifies of Zacharias and Elisabeth, that they were "both righteous before God, walking in *all* the commandments and ordinances of the Lord *blameless.*" Joseph and Mary were both just and holy persons. Anna, the prophetess, must be numbered among the bright examples of Christian perfection. She departed not from the temple, but served the Lord with fastings and prayers day and night. To these may be added Stephen, and Paul, and John, the beloved disciple. And what shall I say more? for the time would fail me to recount the hosts of God's elect, who, in every age, have experienced the full "washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." These have all gone up through great tribulation, having washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Having shown what is the nature and extent of the perfection which God requires, and proved it to be a Bible doctrine, we proceed,

II. *To point out the way by which it may be obtained.*

And first. He who would obtain the blessing of entire sanctification, must believe the blessing attainable. It is in vain to seek for this or any other spiritual blessing in unbelief. If, then, we do not believe that there is any such state attainable in this life, there is no hope that we shall ever obtain it; for we shall see that it is to be received by simple faith. Our unbelief will prove a fatal bar to our advancing a single step toward it. This must first be removed. And to remove it, look into the word of God. Look at the holiness of God; the holiness and spirituality of the divine law. Look at the fullness of the gospel, the efficacy of the blood of Christ, the power of the

Holy Ghost, the exceeding great and precious promises, by which we are made partakers of the divine nature. Look at the experiences of many of the children of God, both as recorded in the Bible and in Christian biography; where a living testimony is borne to the willingness and power of God to save from all sin in this life. And when your heart is well established in the firm belief that God *can* and *will* sanctify you wholly, that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin, then,

Secondly. Labor to understand the nature of the blessing you seek. Many persons, by mistaking the nature of this great work, have sought it in vain for a long time. Some have erred by placing it in something aside from what it is. They have supposed that it consisted in some miraculous change, which would overpower the whole system, and be attended and followed by such a scene of supernatural light and wisdom, such ecstatic joy and overwhelming happiness, as nothing could destroy, or even abate. That light, and joy, and happiness, generally flow from this blessed work, is doubtless true; but these are the *fruits*, not the tree itself.

Others have placed the blessing too high. They have expected that entire sanctification would place them above the infirmities of this life, and far beyond the reach of temptation, neither of which is true. Let it be well understood, then, that the blessing of which we speak consists in the removal of all sin from the heart;—an entire deliverance from the guilt, the power, the pollution, the love, and the practice of sin; and in having the perfect love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given unto us. Do not lose sight of this fact, that it consists in having the heart emptied of sin and filled with love—love to God and man. Whatever else we have, or have not, if we have supreme love to God, and love to all mankind, we have this great blessing.

Thirdly. If we would seek this great salvation aright, we must set out in the possession of present justification. If we have never been truly converted, or are now in a backslidden state, we are unprepared to seek for entire sanctification, until we return to God by repentance, and seek pardon and justification by faith. But if we stand clear in a justified state, and are pressing on toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, we shall soon be brought into deep conviction of mind for holiness of heart and life;—conviction which will not be attended with a sense of guilt and condemnation; for, being already in Christ Jesus, there is no condemnation; but a deep and penetrating sense of want of full conformity to the holy and lovely image of God; and accompanied by an unconquerable hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

Fourthly. This blessing must be sought by simple faith. Not only must we believe that the blessing is attainable, but also that God is both able and willing to impart it to us for Christ's sake. We must believe that there is efficacy in the blood of Christ to cleanse from all sin; that it is the will of God, even our sanctification. We must believe that the Holy Ghost is both able and willing to purify us from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to enable us to "*perfect holiness* in the fear of God." Nay, we must not only believe that he is able and willing, but also that he is "faithful, and *will do it.*" Hold these points fast, and do not relinquish them for a moment. Thou art not far from the kingdom.

Fifthly. This great blessing must be sought in answer to fervent and unceasing prayer, accompanied by fasting and self-denial.

Almost every blessing is suspended upon the condition of prayer; and there are some blessings which cannot be obtained without "fasting and prayer." Not that there is any merit in either; but it has pleased God to say, "Ask, and ye shall receive." "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." "If ye being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

Self-denial is also a duty intimately connected with a vigorous growth in grace. No one can hope to advance in the divine life—to obtain the perfect love of God—who lives in the indulgence of his carnal appetites and passions. Right eyes must be plucked out; right hands cut off.

We must deny ourselves of all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, and righteously, and godly, in this present world, cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Finally. This great salvation of the gospel is to be sought in the diligent use of all the means of grace, and in the faithful performance of all the duties devolving upon us. In a word, we must make it the chief business of life, the all-absorbing concern of the soul, to seek an entire death unto sin; to be "crucified with Christ," that the "life we now live in the flesh may be by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us."

And now, that we may be incited to this all-important duty, let us remember that God has commanded us to be holy; to love him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves. Let us bear in mind, that "without holiness no one shall see the Lord." Let us not forget that our usefulness, our happiness, and our salvation, all depend on our being holy in heart, in life, and in all manner of conversation. And, for our encouragement, let us remember, that God has graciously promised to circumcise our hearts that we may love and obey him as he requires; that he will sprinkle us with clean water, and cleanse us from all our filthiness and from all our idols. Let us not forget that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin; that if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge our consciences from dead works to serve the living God? How much more? Why, as much more as the blood of Christ, as a vicarious sacrifice, is more availing than the blood of bulls and of goats; as much more as the blood of Christ, as a ransom price, is more valuable than those; as much more, as the blood of Christ, as a fountain for sin and uncleanness, is more efficacious than the blood of bulls and of goats. Come, then, my brethren, and by faith plunge into this fountain, and wash your robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. Now, unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON X.

The Present and the Future State of Believers.

BY REV. Z. PADDOCK, D. D.,

OF THE ONEIDA CONFERENCE.

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be, that being clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."—2 Cor. v, 1–4.

ALL Scripture, affirms St. Paul in another place, is given by inspiration of God. With all true believers this is an incontestable fact. None who properly belong to the household of faith, ever think of calling it in question. It should, however, be distinctly remembered, that, though the sacred writings are divinely inspired, their division into chapters, and sections, and verses, is the work of man; and, like everything that man does, is marked with imperfection. In general, these divisions are judicious; but not always. Occasionally there is a severance of things that ought to be read in close and inseparable connection with each other. Facts, and arguments, and illustrations, that should be seen in consecutive order, that should be contemplated in their immediate relative bearings, are sometimes most unaccountably put asunder.

We have an instance in the subject now before us. The text is a part of an argument which commences as far back as the eighth verse of the preceding chapter; which argument loses half of its force by an unnatural division. That we may the more fully enter into the meaning of the apostle, and the more deeply feel the force of his reasoning, let us restore the connection. "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you. We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might, through the thanksgiving of many, redound to the glory of God. For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." Carrying forward the same unbroken train of thought, the apostle adds: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be, that being clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."

Presuming that the scope and design of the apostle are now somewhat clearly before the minds of our hearers, we would proceed to a more particular consideration of the words of the text; in which are comprehensively brought to view—the present state of the good and pious—their future state—and the earnest desire they feel to be freed from the one, and to enjoy the other.

I. We begin with the present state of the good and pious—the people of God.

The text may have had an emphatic reference, originally, to the apostles and primitive teachers of Christianity. But then there was nothing so peculiar in their case as to render the description less applicable to the humblest follower of Christ, in any and every age of the world. The Christian profession, as well as human life, has always involved, substantially, the same trials and conflicts. Whatever, therefore, was true of St. Paul and his illustrious coadjutors, is, at least to a certain extent, true of all those who are now following them, who through faith and patience inherit the divine promises. Their present state is distinguished by several deeply interesting facts, which the apostle enumerates, or, perhaps, more properly, classifies, in the words of the text.

1. They here dwell in an "earthly house." By this expression the apostle evidently means the human body. Man is not a machine, nor is he a mere mass of organized matter. He has something more than a visible form. What we see is not the agent, but only the instrument; not the inhabitant, but only the dwelling. "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." For this intelligent spirit, this interior man, the Creator has furnished an appropriate habitation. And though this dwelling has been greatly injured by sin, it still retains enough of its original excellence to excite our admiration, and induce us to exclaim, with one whose philosophy was equaled only by his devotion, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made!" Galen, a distinguished physician, who was long atheistically inclined, after examining more carefully the human body in the number, perfection, and exquisite adaptation of its parts, was fully convinced of the being and perfection of God, and composed a beautiful hymn to his praise. The animal economy, indeed, infinitely surpasses the most perfect piece of mechanism ever yet produced by the art or ingenuity of man.

But boast as we may of "the human form divine," it is, after all, a mere *earthly* house. The elements of which it was originally composed are nothing better than the dust of the earth. What a lesson of humility does this fact teach us! Well might the patriarch say of man, that "he dwells in a house of clay, whose foundation is in the dust." Though allied to angels by the immortality of our nature, our bodies are "of the earth, earthy." From thence are drawn all our physical supplies. Though, in a given case, it may have been the fact that "man did eat angels' food," yet it is as true now as it was in the days of the hero of Uz, that "out of the earth cometh bread." And then the tendency of this beautiful fabric is to the same source whence its elements were originally taken. "Dust thou art," said an incensed Deity to our great progenitor, after his guilty transgression and unhappy fall, "and unto dust shalt thou return." "Dust to dust, ashes to ashes"—closes the drama of human life. Go, then, boasting mortal, and inscribe over the grave of the once noble form, and the once dimpled cheek, and the once sparkling eye, and the once ruby lip, and the once fascinating tongue,—

> "How loved or valued once avails thee not,
> To whom related, or by whom begot;
> A heap of dust alone remains of thee,
> 'Tis all thou art, and all the proud shall be."

2. But the apostle places our frailty in a still stronger light. The body is not only called a "house," but a tent, or "tabernacle." The house, though earthly and perishing, affords, while it lasts, a permanent residence. But the tabernacle is a removable habitation, and used only by those who are on a journey. Besides, it is frail; held together only by pins, and hooks, and cords; and consequently easily prostrated. With St. Paul, especially, this figure must have had great force; as he was familiar with the structure of such a kind of residence, being by craft a tent-maker.

In the nineteenth verse of the fourth chapter of the book of Job, a part of which has already been quoted, Eliphaz the Temanite, speaking of man's frail tabernacle, asserts that "it is crushed before the moth." The full force of this figure is hardly felt by the mere English reader. The idea generally received is, that man's fragile tenement gives way as does the garment before the teeth of the moth. But this by no means does justice to the sacred text. The original words (לִפְנֵי־עָשׁ) should, doubtless, be rendered, *before the face of the moth.* Job supposes the body of man so exceedingly weak and feeble, that even the moth, flying against it, may break it in pieces!

When we take a view of the surprising structure and curious workmanship of the human body, the continuance of life may justly excite greater astonishment than even its dissolution. There are so many nicely adjusted parts in this complicated structure, depending apparently on very weak and slender instruments; such an immense number of delicate tissues, arteries with their innumerable ramifications, veins with their inimitably formed valves, nerves distributed to every part; and all these so frail and delicate, that the slightest accident would seem sufficient to arrest the essential movements of life, and prostrate in a moment the whole beautiful fabric. Accordingly the most trivial accidents are sometimes fatal to man. "A fly, a grape-stone, or a hair, can kill." The slightest touch, and the film, the bubble breaks, the tabernacle is dissolved, and the deathless occupant passes away to another habitation!

"Ah, in what perils is vain life engaged!
What slight neglects, what trivial faults, destroy
The hardiest frame! Of indolence, of toil,
We die; of want, of superfluity.
The all-surrounding heaven, the vital air,
Is full of death."

3. And then the present life is one of trial and conflict. The fragile tabernacle in which we pass our brief probation is the seat of pain and anguish: "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan," says the apostle, "being burdened." To have some idea of what he and his illustrious compeers suffered, we have only to turn back to the details of the preceding chapter: "We are troubled on every side," &c. Verses 8–11. Speaking, elsewhere, of the suffering of some of the ancient worthies—perhaps the Maccabean Jews—he says that they "had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings; yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonments: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented, (of whom the world was not worthy,) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens, and in caves of the earth." And all of this would be equally true, if said of the primitive Christians. They, too, were accounted as sheep for the slaughter, and devoted to a persecution as cruel as it was unprincipled and malicious.

Modern Christians may not pass through the same kind of trials. Persecution is not now legalized. Liberty of conscience, at least in form, is beginning to be enjoyed in most civilized countries. But still the good are exposed to a sort of persecution. If not obliged to suffer legal pains and penalties, they often have to endure, what is, perhaps, still worse—contumely, and reproach, and revilings, and almost every species of insult. The carnal mind is still, as it always has been, enmity against God. Hence, they that go forth to the Redeemer without the camp, must expect to bear his reproach. The men of this world will never act justly and candidly toward a pure and elevated religion. They always affect to pity or to despise it. It is, in their estimation, either weakness, or derangement, or enthusiasm, or mercenariness, or hypocrisy.

And while the people of God have these "fightings without," it is theirs to suffer, at least occasionally, "fears within." The enemy thrusts sore at them, and fills them with a sort of unutterable anxiety. With the Psalmist they are often forced to exclaim, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me!" "The enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground; he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead." And while reviewing their past conflicts, with him they may affirm, "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold on me: I found trouble and sorrow."

Religion was never designed to annihilate the sympathies of our common nature; but to control, and refine, and sanctify, and elevate them. The Christian is not, therefore, nor can he be, an indifferent spectator of what is occurring in the world around him. He is pained to see the sufferings of his fellow-men;—to see the sickness, and poverty, and wretchedness, and bereavement, and oppression, which are to be found in almost every part of this sin-stricken and distracted orb. For, at best,

> "This earth is a sorrowful stage,
> A valley of weeping and wo!
> From childhood to garrulous age,
> The tear uninvited will flow."

Now, in view of all this, the good man sympathetically "groans."

But especially is he pained to see God dishonored by the wickedness of the world. In the strongly hyperbolical language of the man after God's own heart, he is often constrained to say, "Rivers"—not rills, or brooks, but *rivers*—"of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law." With the plaintive Jeremiah, he exclaims, "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! O that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people and go from them! for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men." A righteous Lot was vexed every day with the filthy conversation of the wicked. And it is with deep concern, with all but overwhelming anxiety, that the Christian now sees the sabbath profaned, the ordinances of divine appointment despised, the holy name of God blasphemed, and vice and immorality triumphant in the world. But nothing gives him greater anguish of spirit than to witness the backslidings and inconsistencies of those who profess to be walking in the ways of righteousness. Just hear the language of that profound philosopher, that acute metaphysician, that devout theologian, St. Paul, in view of the dreadful apostasy and wicked impenitence of his countrymen: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."

And, finally, the very dissolution of this earthly house of our tabernacle is preceded, as well as attended, with inconceivable and unutterable agonies. It were an endless task to specify all the pains "that flesh is heir to." Some bring a feeble constitution with them into the world, and, from their own experience, hardly know what the word *health* means. But even the most robust are not exempted from bodily pains and sufferings. Now, all of these are precursors of death. And then there are the agonies of death itself—"the pains, the groans, the dying strife." Disease invades the feeble tenement. We feel the shock, and try to avert the mortal blow. But it comes with a force which baffles all our powers of resistance. The springs of life now begin to fail. Still the struggle is continued. At length, a leaden coldness passes over every part of the animal frame. And now the mortal pang is past—the earthly tabernacle dissolved!

II. Such is human life, and such its termination, even to the people of God. Let us now, pursuant to the train of thought at first indicated, glance at their future state; that state of being and blessedness which awaits them beyond the boundaries of mortality. "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

But what is meant by this building of God, this house not made with hands? Whitby and some other distinguished commentators suppose that the resurrection body is intended. The glorified body may well be called a "habitation;" for such it doubtless will be for the deathless spirit throughout the unwasting ages of eternity. But the reference in the text seems to be something nearer, something to be found at death, and to be enjoyed *before* the revival of the body. Any other view of the subject would hardly do justice to the apostle's reasoning. Certainly, St. Paul was no materialist. Nor did he believe the soul would lie dormant with the body in the grave till the morning of the resurrection. Of this the whole context bears unequivocal proof. He speaks of the body as if it did not even belong to our persons. "*We*," says he, "that are *in* this tabernacle do groan." It is the soul that makes the man. This, though *in* the body, is not *of* the body. The spirit is immaterial, immortal, and capable of endless improvement. At death the believer is not like an ejected tenant, forced out of his present dwelling, without having another provided for his reception. One is already fitted up in the skies, whither the Forerunner has for him entered. "In my Father's house," said Christ to his disciples, "are many mansions.—I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." These things premised, and keeping up the figure in the text, we remark,

1. The saint's future residence will be a "*house*," and not a mere "*tabernacle*." This antithesis is strongly marked in the text. When the saint gets "*home*," he will

have no further use for the tent; for his journey will be ended. Besides, a residence so frail, and imperfect, will then be wholly unsuited to the dignity of his character; he will want a "temple," a "palace," a "mansion." Such a place has, accordingly, been prepared for him. And if the beauty and grandeur of the Athenian Parthenon were the wonder and admiration of ages, what shall we say of the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens? What though the architectural moldings of that splendid edifice may have glittered in the sunbeams with brilliant tints of red and blue; the building of which we here speak is illuminated "with the glory of God and the Lamb dwelling in the midst of it." And if the former was made of Pentelic marble, the latter is, according to the testimony of John, composed of "pure gold," and "all manner of precious stones."

As the "house" of which the text speaks is to be the palace of the great King, as well as the future residence of the saints, it will doubtless correspond as well to the glory of the one, as to the elevation and perfection of the other. God dwelt figuratively in the temple at Jerusalem, and had the chambers of his priests surrounding him on every side; but he dwells *visibly* in this heavenly house, and is gradually collecting within its walls all the countless myriads of his saints, and will make them for ever ministering and rejoicing priests around his throne.

Thus "clothed upon with their house from heaven," their bliss will be perfect. They will find the powers of their minds vastly enlarged, their faculties more vigorous, their imaginations more expanded, and, above all, the principle of love more active. Introduced into this heavenly habitation, they will rejoice in a happy deliverance from their former frail and sorrowing tabernacle. And what a blissful change will this be to the saints of God!—a change from death to life, from affliction and distress to the most unmingled joys, from a sick and fainting body to a mansion of glory, from a state of corruption to a state the most holy and refined; in a word, from earth to heaven.

2. To give us still higher conceptions of the saint's future residence, the apostle denominates it "a building of God, a house not made with hands." God is its builder and maker.

We may now see something of the skill of the supreme Architect in the worlds that surround us. In the great outlines of nature, which art cannot reach, and where the utmost efforts of man would have been utterly ineffectual, God himself has finished everything with amazing magnificence, grandeur, and beauty. Where are harmony so perfect, and symmetry so exact, and sublimity so apparent, as in the works of the Almighty? The heavens and the earth, with all their grand and complicated appendages, exhibit in the most striking manner the infinite power, wisdom, and goodness of Him "who spake and it was done, commanded and it stood fast." But on the heavenly mansion there will be, so to speak, a still greater expenditure of these attributes of the Deity. And if eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, the things which God hath laid up for them that love him,—who would think of comparing the architectural skill of Ictinus or Callistratus with that of Him who "built all things?" "Our God is the rock; *his* work is perfect." Here nothing is wanting, nothing redundant, nothing out of place. As it is a building of God, it bears, and will eternally bear, the stamp of his own infinite perfection.

3. *Where* this "house" is we know not, only that it is "in the heavens." We are, indeed, taught to consider heaven as a *state*, rather than as a *place*. Still, from several passages of Scripture, we have reason to conclude that there is some portion of the universe set apart to be the special residence of the King Immortal; that there is, somewhere within the boundaries of the creation, a glorious place where Christ in his human form now lives and reigns, and where he will, eventually, assemble all the happy intelligences of the whole universe. Here—wherever it is—stands the habitation of the saints, the dwelling-place of those who have come up out of great tribulation, who have washed their garments, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

4. And here they are to dwell for ever. "*Eternal* in the heavens," is the language of the text. Theirs is a habitation which all the force in the universe cannot move, and which the wasteless ages of eternity itself cannot destroy. Apart from the presence and the smiles of God, this is, perhaps, the crowning circumstance of all.

"A perpetuity of bliss—is bliss." Everything on earth is in a state of fluctuation and change. "Here we have no continuing city." All is mortal, mutable, uncertain. One generation passeth away, and another cometh. The busy tribes of men are changing their positions like swarms of insects floating in the atmosphere, blown about and scattered by every wanton gale. Even the purest and most permanent enjoyments of which the present state is capable are liable to many interruptions. But in heaven all is immortal, all ever-during. Indeed, could its blissful inhabitants,

> "So rich in rapture, fear an end,
> That ghastly thought would drink up all their joy,
> And quite unparadise the realms of bliss."

But no such fear exists. They know that their happiness is as permanent as the throne of God, and that it will be as lasting as eternity itself. For now, emphatically, "mortality is swallowed up of life."

III. Such, then, is the present state, and such the future, of true believers. It remains that we consider, in the third place, the desire they feel to be freed from the one, and to enjoy the other. "Earnestly desiring," says the apostle, "to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven."

1. The desire for immortality is, perhaps, common to the species. All wish to live for ever. "None but the wretch who has degraded himself below the character of immortality," as Mr. Addison forcibly observes, "is very willing to resign his pretensions to it." Such a one desires annihilation, simply because he *dares* not to be immortal! But in coming to this state, he does violence to his own moral nature. God made man to exist for ever, and gave to his soul a propensity corresponding to his immortal destination. He loves being, and dreads the extinction of it. Thus it has been with the great majority in all ages. Greece and Rome give to the fact their joint testimony. As a specimen of what might be quoted to almost any extent, take the following instance from Marcus Tullius Cicero, the most eloquent, if not the most profound, of all the Roman philosophers. In his well-known dream of Scipio, he beautifully observes, "If I were now disengaged from my cumbrous body, and on my way to Elysium"—

the place where his countrymen supposed the virtuous would dwell after death—"and some superior being should meet me in my flight, and make me the offer of returning, and remaining in my body, I should, without hesitation, reject the offer: so much rather would I go to Elysium, to be with Socrates, and Plato, and all the ancient worthies, and spend my time in conversing with them."

Not only did Socrates, and Plato, and Xenophon, hope to live after death, and enjoy a state of felicity superior to anything earth could give; but the same hope was indulged even by the masses of their benighted countrymen. Reasoning from this common propensity, Greek and Roman philosophy reached the same general conclusion: it was, that man *would* live for ever. This argument is stated strongly by a celebrated writer of the last century, whose language we have just had occasion to quote. He says,—

> "Whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,
> This longing after immortality?
> Or whence this secret dread and inward horror
> Of falling into naught? Why shrinks the soul
> Back on herself, and startles at destruction?
> 'Tis the divinity that stirs within us:
> 'Tis heaven itself that points out an hereafter,
> And intimates eternity to man."

2. But what was a mere matter of hope, or rather of desire, with the heathen, is, with the Christian, a matter of revelation. On a subject of such infinite importance he is not left to the teachings of a mere earth-born philosophy. He "*knows*," on authority which can never be called in question, that there is a state of existence beyond the grave. Of this glorious truth he has the most ample and satisfactory assurance. The sacred writings have furnished all the evidence for which he could reasonably ask. With the Christian, then, it is not a point of speculation or conjecture whether there be a God who will honor his people with eternal life. It comes to him authenticated by the most explicit averments of Him who is, by his own designation, "THE TRUTH"—the truth itself.

It is important that we further remark, in this connection, that, though the light of nature and the dictates of reason might be sufficient to authorize the presumption that man will exist after the dissolution of his earthly tabernacle, it is the Bible which tells us—"Verily, there is a reward for the righteous"—a reward of inconceivable glory and of endless duration. So that here again, when the light of reason utterly fails us, revelation comes in to our aid. It points to an eternity of the most pure and exalted felicity, to be enjoyed as the sequence of a pious and virtuous life. Its teachings on this point are most explicit and satisfactory. Christ said to his disciples, "If I go away, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." "Verily, I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting." "These"—the wicked—"shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal."

3. Besides, the pious have an experimental knowledge of divine things. They have actually tasted of the good word of God and the powers of the world to come. God has given them, as the apostle phrases it in the fifth verse, "the earnest of the Spirit." Being united by a living faith to Him "who only hath immortality," they feel assured of an eternal residence with him in the kingdom of God. So much of heaven is already enjoyed by anticipation, nay, by actual *participation*, that to doubt its reality, would be to doubt their own experience, their own personal consciousness. With St. Paul they can say, "I *know* whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." Standing with him on the eminence of faith, and surveying both worlds, they triumphantly exclaim, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but to all them also that love his appearing." Like the saints of old, "they desire a better country, even a heavenly." The late President Fisk, when dying, said to his wife, "The soul has an energy of its own; and so far from my body pressing my soul down

to the dust, I feel as if my soul had almost power to raise my body upward, and bear it away; and it will at last, by the power of God, effectually draw it to heaven; for its attractions are thitherward."

Now this desire for heaven, my brethren, is not natural to us. So long as we remain in an unrenewed state, we know nothing of this earnest longing to be transferred from an earthly house to "the palace of angels and God." All, indeed, know that they must die, and all wish to go to heaven when they die. But, mark you, this wish does not spring from a strong desire to be in the presence of God, and to take part in the lofty employments and spiritual services of the heavenly temple; but solely from a conviction that there are but two places for the reception of disembodied spirits; namely, heaven and hell: and they wish to go to the former, because they have a dread of the latter. They desire to go to heaven, because they do not wish to endure the pains of hell. If they could only remain here for ever, they would be perfectly contented, and quite willing that heaven should be peopled from some other world. Only let them enjoy the riches, and honors, and pleasures of earth, and they would gladly leave to the angels the honors and joys of the heavenly kingdom. Others may talk of heaven, and say they wish to go there; but the renewed Christian is the only man in the world who understands the nature of its joys, and habitually and earnestly desires a place in its courts. He, and he only, feels that "while he is at home in the body, he is absent from the Lord."

4. But though the Christian desires heaven, he does not desire death. "Not," says the apostle in the fourth verse, "that we would be unclothed." There is nothing in death, abstractly considered, that is desirable. The dying agonies, the pale and lifeless corpse, the gnawing worms, the process of decomposition, and all the other revolting accompaniments of the king of terrors, cannot be viewed, even by the most pious, with any sort of complacency. To them, as well as to others, death is an "enemy." But when regarded in connection with its blessed results, when viewed as "the gate to endless joy," death then, to the good man, becomes even desirable. In the midst of his earthly toils and conflicts, and in view of the joys that

await him beyond the grave, he "groans" to be delivered from the one, and to enjoy the other: he is anxious to depart and be with Christ, which he considers far better than the best possible earthly enjoyments.

The subject suggests several reflections, with some of which we shall close.

1. We should bless God for the gospel. It is this that brings life and immortality to light. The heathen rather *hoped* that they should live for ever, than confidently *believed* it would be so. Philosophy might aid faith in this matter, but could never give birth to it. And then if the existence of man after death were placed beyond a doubt, it would be a source of no comfort to him without the assurance that that existence would be a happy one; an assurance this, which nothing but the gospel can give him. Without its teachings, as well as an interest in its gracious provisions and promises, we should, "through fear of death," like the heathen of old, "be all our lifetime subject to bondage." But the Christian revelation brings to the mind the much-needed demonstration. It is this that gives birth to that faith which is "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." And to this faith we are indebted for all that is cheering in the prospect of a future state.

"Faith builds a bridge across the gulf of death,
To break the shock blind nature cannot shun,
And lands thought smoothly on the further shore.
Death's terror is the mountain faith removes—
That mountain barrier between man and peace.
'Tis faith dreams destruction, and absolves
From every clamorous charge, the guiltless tomb."

2. But then the gospel will be powerless, so far at least as our individual salvation is concerned, if its provisions be not properly received. Indeed, in this case, it will only "damn us to a deeper hell"—only render our condition in a future state the more intolerable. For while it is written, "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved," it is also written, "He that believeth not shall be damned." Fearful words to the impenitent and unbelieving! Christ is the resurrection and the life: but to participate in the bliss of his everlasting kingdom; to live and reign with him, we must now be united to him by a true and living faith;

and thence experience the renovation of our whole moral nature. All that is desirable in immortality hinges upon this. To die without personal faith, involves nothing less than a sudden encounter of almighty vengeance—the utter ruin of a being originally made only a little lower than the angels. Candidate for immortality! fly to the Saviour—fly to the Rock cleft to take you in—fly for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before you in the gospel!

> "Believe, and show the reason of a man!
> Believe, and taste the pleasures of a God!
> Believe, and look in triumph on the tomb!"

3. The subject should diminish our attachment to things earthly, and increase our desires for things heavenly. The former are mutable, fading, perishing; the latter, permanent, enduring, eternal. Man should estimate himself, chiefly, in view of his immortality. It is this that gives consequence and dignity to his very being. For if his existence did not extend beyond the contracted limits of mortality, he might, with the utmost fitness, practically adopt the Epicurean maxim, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." But the immortality of his nature once admitted, and it gives a fresh interest in all that relates to his character and destiny. See man rising in the scale of being! This is only the commencement of his existence, the vestibule of life, the starting point of an interminable journey. He is to live for ever in the height of happiness, or in the depth of misery. How little, then, should he think of this world—how much of the next!

> "The soul of man, (let man in homage bow
> Who names his soul,) a native of the skies,
> High-born, and free, his freedom should maintain
> Unsold, unmortgaged for earth's little bribes.
> The illustrious stranger, in this foreign land,
> Like strangers, jealous of her dignity,
> Studious of home, and ardent to return,
> Of earth suspicious, earth's enchanted cup
> With cool reserve light touching, should indulge
> On immortality her godlike taste;
> Then take larger drafts, make her chief banquet there."

4. If such is the result of death, let not the good man be afraid to die. There are many who look at death simply in the pain that it inflicts, and tremble with fearful apprehension. Many, doubtless, fall into the embraces

of death with almost as little physical suffering as is experienced by those who give themselves up to

"Tired nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep."

But were the last conflict ever so distressing, "'twere useless to die a thousand deaths in dreading one." In a professing Christian, especially, such a feeling is wholly out of character. His faith should be more than a match for death, even in its most horrid forms. The religion of Christ is now just what it used to be. It has lost none of its power. Again "it will stop the mouths of lions," and again "quench the violence of fire." The God of the martyrs is our God. And especially should we look beyond death to the house not made with hands, and regard the dissolution of our tabernacle as a mere *incident* in the consummation of our hope. Listening to the songs sung before the throne, and feeling that Christ gives victory over the last enemy, the saint need not hesitate to indulge the aspirations of the poet:—

"O when will death, (now stingless,) like a friend,
Admit me of their choir? O when will death
This mold'ring, old partition-wall throw down,
Give beings one in nature one abode?
O death divine, that giv'st us to the skies!
That readmitt'st us, through the guardian hands
Of elder brethren, to our Father's throne."

5. Finally, let us not mourn for those who have left an earthly house, and have gone to inhabit the one eternal in the heavens. Their sufferings are ended, their bliss is perfect. The Lamb that is in the midst of the throne now feeds them, and leads them to living fountains of waters. Sorrow, and pain, and care, and temptation, are unknown in the place of their residence. Dwelling in the heavenly temple, they are companions of the wisest and holiest beings that ever lived. Every wish is gratified—every desire fulfilled. Why, then, mourn for them? Why sorrow that they are taken away from the evil to come? We may be painfully sensible of our own loss, but to grieve on their account would be inconsistent with every just view of the heavenly world. Let us rather prepare to join them in their lofty employment, and "wish ourselves away" to the habitations of the blessed.

SERMON XI.

Prayer—Outline of an Argument for its Institution.

BY REV. ABEL STEVENS, A.M.,

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> "Thus saith the Lord God: I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them."—Ezek. xxxvi, 37.

IF our world had rolled on until this date in its present depravity, and that agony of wo which yet overspreads it; and if it had possessed a less perfect revelation, one which afforded a true knowledge of its lost condition, and the awful character of God, but no notion of access to him by prayer, through the merits of an atonement: if it, at this moment, were in such a state, trembling under the knowledge of God, without daring to look up unto him, groping through a half-illumined darkness, in which the realities of present wretchedness could be seen, but not the hopes of future relief; what would be the effect of a proclamation made convincingly to the whole earth—say by an apparition of angels in the firmament, as once on the plains of Bethlehem, that *on a given day God would hear prayer*, and that supplication, offered on terms practicable to all, should secure any blessing truly appropriate to man, and should avail for the blessedness of the suppliant, even through everlasting ages? What amazement and exultation would such an event spread through the world! How would the hours which were yet to precede that day be counted! How would the friends of the sick, by the virtue of medicines, and by tender cares, try to preserve the flickering existence, that the dying beloved one might pray before he departed, and the aged and despairing who have longed for the grave, seek to prolong their lives to the auspicious morning! Surely such a proclamation, under such circumstances, would be like the trump of resurrection to the saints; and the emotions of mankind would be like those of the despairing lunatic, when some beautiful dream deludes his sleep, and mingles smiles and tears on his haggard countenance. Would any sleep the last night which was to precede it? Would not the house-tops, the hills, and the mountain sides, be thronged with the multitudes anxious to see the first rays of that jubilee of the world? And what a sight would the sun of that day witness in his course around the earth, of prostrate, grateful, imploring millions!

Such, it is probable, would be the effect of novelty in a privilege which, now, because it is always at our command, is reluctantly improved by many, and utterly rejected by most. How absurd, as well as guilty, is sin! How valuable, though unvalued, the privileges of the gospel! A lost spirit would give all worlds to be placed in the probationary position of a living sinner for one hour; and if the hope of salvation were to be limited to one day instead of being continued through years; if, in other words, it were certainly known that to-morrow was to be the judgment, the sun of this day would go down amid the tears and prayers of the world.

Yet, independently of such illustrations, and depreciated as the privilege of prayer is by our desultory familiarity with it, to what thoughtful mind does it not present itself as one of the most wonderful and precious institutions of religion! Let us contemplate it this morning.

WE PROPOSE TO SHOW THE EXCELLENCY OF PRAYER AS AN INSTITUTION OF OUR HOLY RELIGION.

I. *Prayer is a "reasonable service."* This can be best shown by examining those speculative objections which have been preferred by skeptics against it. Let us consider some of them.

One is, *That prayer is inconsistent with the divine omniscience.* "If God knows your wants, and your disposition to have them supplied, why inform and importune him in prayer?" The objection proceeds from a misapprehension of the design of prayer. Its *ostensible* design is indeed the attainment of the blessing for which we pray; but there is an *ulterior* and higher object for which it was appointed, namely, the spiritual influence, the *disciplinary effect* of the habit. The objection would apply equally to the other departments of God's economy. He could make bread grow spontaneously, or drop manna from heaven, but he requires man to toil for his sustenance, and this necessity of labor is no curse, but a blessing; it is a source of health, and vigor, and cheerfulness. Excessive toil, the "sweat of the face," was the curse pronounced at the fall, but the first man was appointed to "dress" and "keep" the "garden of Eden." God could have constituted the human mind, so that its improvement might be natural, not the result of protracted study; but he has not, and why? Because he saw it would be good for man to co-operate with himself in procuring improvement and happiness. The analogy applies equally to religion, to prayer. Our text is an example; after predicting to Israel certain mercies, God still declares, "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." He knew their need of these mercies, he compassionated their necessity, he had power to confer them all unconditionally, yet yearning over his chosen people with the solicitude of a father, he still refused them the promised mercy, unless "inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." And why? Solely because he saw the condition would be salutary to them; it would remind them of their dependence upon him, it would bring them into direct communion with himself, and thus the *moral* effect would be a greater blessing than the particular mercies presented as the objects of their prayers. Hence it is that prayer is made the condition of our spiritual mercies—it is that our heavenly Father may *doubly* bless us—bless us with the mercies sought, and in the process of seeking them.

Man's measures contemplate usually but a specific object, God's contemplate many at once. The apparent design of the sun is to illuminate the world, "to rule the day;" but, on closer examination, this is found to be only one among many of its agencies—while it enlightens, it also beautifies nature with coloring; it is essential to vegetation; it varies the seasons; it sustains in harmonious motion the machinery of our whole system. So in God's moral economy, manifold results, ostensible and ulterior, are accomplished. Thus it is with prayer. The objection, I repeat, is founded in a short-sighted view of the design of the institution—a view which stops short of its *ulterior* purpose.

2. Another objection alledges *that prayer is inconsistent with God's immutability.* "Why entreat and importune him? You cannot change his immutable nature." This

objection is founded in a misapprehension of the divine immutability. In what consists the immutability of God? I answer, God is immutable in the *principles* of his administration, but not in his *acts*. There was a period when he did not create, one when he did create, and another when "he rested from all his work which he had made:" he changed in act, but not in nature. He is probably still putting forth his mighty power throughout the universe, creating and dissolving worlds, but he is the same God, "yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Our adventitious circumstances may lead to various manifestations of the divine attributes, but their nature never varies. In heaven our God "is the light thereof;" on earth he is the Saviour of the world; in hell he is a consuming fire; yet in heaven, earth, and hell, he is the same God from eternity to eternity. The laws protect you to-day because you conform to them, to-morrow they may put you to death for transgressing them; not because they change—the change is in yourself. So the sinner is heard if he truly prays, but lost if he prays not; yet God does not change, it is his ordained economy that it should be so. And this economy is founded in his immutable wisdom.

3. It is objected again that *the universe is governed by secondary causes; and, in order that prayer should bring about results different from what would take place without it, there must be an interference with—a suspension of—those fixed causes; but there is no such interference.* I have three remarks to make on this objection. The first is, that it applies to prayer only so far as physical blessings are concerned, for these alone are affected by physical causes. All the spiritual objects of prayer belong to that moral economy of which prayer itself is a component part, and which, by its relation to the voluntary agency of both God and man, is not subject to the fixed laws that are necessary to a physical mechanism, like the natural world. Still it is admitted that physical blessings are legitimate objects of prayer. Our "daily bread" is enumerated by our Lord among them. The rains, the harvest, the restoration of the sick, the safety of the wayfarer on the sea or on the land, are subjects of its blessed efficacy. I remark, secondly, that the objector is incompetent to the assumption, that there is no divine interference with fixed causes

in answer to prayer. How does he know it? And how can he assert it against God's own assertion if he is incompetent to know it? The great Newton, after all his amazing discoveries, considered himself only as a child playing with bubbles on the seashore, while the fathomless ocean lay unexplored before him. The objection assumes that we see the whole series of causes and effects; but that series, extending from the effect which we observe up to the first cause, is immense, and loses itself at last in infinity—the infinity of the great First Cause. What know we of the universe, that we can presume to pronounce what does or what does not take place amidst the vast occult machinery? He who made its frame is also the Author of its moral economy. Shall we assume that he has not harmonized the two systems where they come into mutual relations near his own throne, because our limited vision cannot penetrate thither? But, thirdly, I remark it is not necessary to assume that there is any rupture of natural causes in the case. We notice but the lowest links in the chain of those causes; how then can we assume that the higher ones are not adapted or controlled so as to meet this peculiarity of the moral system? The last link of the series is in the hand of Omnipotence. Why may not the divine energy be transmitted down through the whole with varied results, and yet with no interruption of the successive links; as the electric power passes with quickening or destroying influence to the object at the end of the chain, without visible effect on the intermediate links? Man's own contrivances often exhibit this capability. Behold the mighty machinery of the steamer: the effect of a man's hand can reverse its course, and carry the immense structure backward, without a collision of the works; and cannot the Maker of the world so control his works as to bring about, without confusion, results different from what our little minds judge necessary to the instruments which he has appointed? The objection, therefore, is, in the first place, founded upon a gratuitous assumption; and, in the second place, it is inapplicable, even if the assumption were just.

4. Another objection is, *man's comparative insignificance.* "Can it be supposed that the infinite God will stoop from amid all worlds to regard our wants and prayers?" The

objection includes two elements,—the insignificance of man and the greatness of the Deity. The first is a mere fallacy. Man is, indeed, physically insignificant, but not morally nor intellectually. It is, perhaps, no hyperbole to say, that one planet compared with the rest of the universe is but as a drop of water compared with one planet; and the millions of men upon the one are but as the millions of animalculæ in the other. But man's importance inheres in his intellectual and moral relations and destinies, and in these respects all physical worlds are but dust in the balance compared with the lowliest spirit that lifts up its suppliant voice to God. That spirit is related to God's angels; it has even in its ruin one attribute in common with the Deity himself—it is everlasting. And on this spirit God has impressed a law of indefinite progress, which, when considered in connection with the eternity assigned for its development, gives it an appalling grandeur. The instinct of the brute attains to a limited capacity; its race remains now where it was three thousand years ago, and will thus remain till the end of time; but man knows no such limit; he advances till he is summoned to other worlds, and his successive generations still carry forward the tasks left incomplete by their predecessors. Both his intellectual and moral constitution imply his capacity for indefinite growth. Who then can attempt the stupendous inference of his future greatness? Weakest and most imbecile of all living creatures at his birth, in a few years he masters all others, controls the elements by his arts, and by his science transcends his own sphere to survey kindred worlds. This he does amid innumerable impediments, physical, mental, and moral. What then must be his progress in his purely spiritual sphere? It is not improbable that an hour's exercise of his faculties there will unfold them more than the labor of a life here.

This most impressive view of the human spirit gives to your soul an importance which is sublime and even terrible. The impulse of almighty God is upon you, and it will carry you forward for ever and ever. The bark of your fate is drawn resistlessly in the wake of a destiny which will sweep on while the stars fall, and suns waste into nothingness, even unto endless ages! And, correspondent with this destiny will be the growth of your capacity for happiness or wo.

Startling, but inevitable inferences, press upon us from this view of our destiny. The period will come when the feeble child, whose intelligence scarcely reaches the limits of its nursery, will stand forth somewhere in the universe mightier in mind than the tallest archangel that shines amidst "the excellent glory." It may never reach that angel, for he also will advance for ever, but it will reach his present position and pass it, and leave it in the distance behind as a fading point of light. The time will come when that new-born spirit, now unequal in intelligence to the insect that perishes, will mount up as on eagles' wings, will range through unknown worlds, will bow itself amidst the light of God's own throne, and may even transcend the present capacity of all created intelligence. Only God is infinite; all other intelligence in the universe has, therefore, a present limit, but there is no limit to the capacity of that dawning spirit. No finite mind may be able, even in imagination, to measure the present dimension of created intellect in the universe; but God can, and if he were to define its boundary, yet the infant soul which he is at this moment casting into that ocean of intelligence, will extend the ever widening circle of its capacity, till it reaches that limit, and in some solemn hour, amid the far off ages of the future, it will pass over that limit, and still swell onward toward infinity.

Such is the soul of man, and hence is it that the Godhead deemed it befitting to become incarnated for its redemption; hence the spiritual world—heaven and hell—is represented as in conflict for its fate; hence those appalling words, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

With such views, or if these be deemed too hypothetical, yet with any approximation to them, what becomes of the objection drawn from man's insignificance, or the objection, substantially the same, to the atonement, deduced from the discoveries of astronomical science?*

Let us pass to the next element in the objection—*the greatness of the Deity.* "Can it be supposed that the infinite God will stoop from amid all worlds to regard our wants and prayers?" Yes, the greatness of God, the very ground of the objection, is the ground of our confidence. God is *infinite;* were he finite, however great, there might be plausibility in the objection. Then it might be supposed that his attention would be so absorbed in the more general affairs of the universe, as to exclude from it entirely our minute interests, but *infinite* greatness implies that the *small as well as the great, the minutiæ as well as the aggregate*—that all things are comprehended by it. Were there a particle of sand not pervaded by God's presence, then he would not be omnipresent. Did the smallest animalculæ escape his cognizance, then he could not be omniscient; his Godhead would be destroyed. Whatever falls short of the infinite, *falls infinitely short of it.* The arrow that misses the mark by the distance of an inch, misses it as really as if by a hundred feet. I repeat, infinite knowledge implies the cognizance of not merely the universe at large, but, definitely, of *every minute thing in it.* The sigh of penitence that goes up from a dying bed, in the lowliest hovel, or from the dungeon of the prisoner, enters into the ears of the Lord God of Sabbaoth, amid the hallelujahs of all the heavens. And from the constitution of his infinite mind, it must be noticed by him, *as distinctly as if it were the only sound in his universe.* It is as much the necessity as it is the mercy of God's nature, that a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice. Thus, then, these four speculative difficulties vanish, and prayer may be affirmed to be a *reasonable exercise.*

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* See Chalmers' Sermons, on the latter objection.

II. *Prayer is a salutary exercise.* It is so, in the first place, because it is the *means* of the blessings prayed for. Faith is the condition of salvation; it is faith that is imputed for righteousness: yet prayer is the expression, the vehicle of faith; prayer is the wing on which faith rises to the mercy-seat. The affirmation is as true in regard to prayer, as it is in regard to faith, that no responsible sinner has ever been saved without it. God has not made it one of the conditions of salvation, yet it is an inseparable appliance to those conditions.

Prayer is an exercise of universal applicability. Our *physical* circumstances are to be relieved or hallowed by it. Are we destitute? We are taught by Christ to pray for "our daily bread," and the Psalmist assures us that "He will regard the prayer of the destitute." Have we abundance? It is to be "sanctified by the word of God and prayer;" and thus every meal is to become a sacrament. "Is any afflicted? let him pray," says St. James. It applies to our *intellectual* wants. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, and it shall be given." It applies, above all, to our *spiritual* necessities: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved:" and summarily, "men ought always to pray;" to "pray without ceasing;" to "pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting." In the second place, its disciplinary effect is salutary. We have already viewed this aspect of the subject, but it is worthy of another glance. "We find," says a distinguished writer, "from the whole course of nature, that God governs the world not by independent acts, but by a connected system. The instruments which he employs in the ordinary works of his providence are not physically necessary to his operations. He might have acted without them if he pleased. He might, for instance, have created all men without the intervention of parents. But where then had been the beneficial connection between parents and children, and the numerous advantages resulting to human society from such connections? The difficulty lies here: the *uses* arising from the *connections* of God's acts may be various; and such are the pregnancies of his works, that a *single act* may answer a prodigious variety of purposes. Of these several purposes we are for the most part ignorant; and from this ignorance are derived our weak objections against the ways of his providence; while we foolishly presume that, like human agents, he has but one end in view." Now the effect of prayer, aside from its particular object, may be among these "several purposes." How can it fail to be thus salutary, when the first impression it gives the mind is that of dependence? If our spiritual blessings were not conditional, but matters of course, like the blessings of light, air, or water, we would forget, as the world has in regard to the latter, the merciful agency of God in conferring them. Prayer, therefore, tends to *humility*. *Gratitude*, likewise, is produced by it in the same manner; for every blessing received in answer to it, comes to us as a gratuity of the divine mercy. There is no virtuous affection with which it is not congenial. It is serene, tranquilizing, spiritualizing. How invigorating is it to the spirit thus to commune with God, and refresh itself with the light of his countenance, in the secrecy of prayer at early dawn, before committing itself to the duties and perils of the day! How tranquilizing in the midst of these cares and perils to retire at noon to the hallowed solitude of the closet, and re-collect its scattered thoughts and energies! How congenial with the evening hour of rest to bow itself again in His presence, and imploring pardon for its imperfections, and a blessing on its deeds, sink into peaceful slumbers, invoking benedictions on itself and all men! How blessed to supplicate blessings on our enemies! How endearing become all the ties of life!—their joys and their sorrows are consecrated by mutual prayers. How precious the tender affections of parents and children, of brothers and sisters, whose home-life is thus imbued with the sanctity and consolation of religion; and how do the memories of such a home follow its members, when dispersed over the world, with salutary lessons and holy sympathies, panting for reunion in heaven! Assuredly, an institution which imparts sanctity to ordinary life, cementing its affections, purifying its joys, relieving its sorrows, and assuaging its passions, commends itself to us as one of the most salutary ordinances of our religion, and worthy of the interest attached to it by an apostle, who "exhorts, therefore, that first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men," "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." It cannot consist with sin. "Prayer," says one, "will make us either cease sinning, or sin make us cease praying."

III. *Prayer is a consolatory exercise.* Man has a moral nature. His moral faculties are as distinguishable, and as constitutional, as his physical or intellectual. His most perfect happiness consists in the due gratification of all his faculties. But most of mankind limit this gratification to the physical nature. A few, "of soul more elevate," add the pleasures of intellect. Yet the highest demand of our nature remains unanswered. The greatest monsters, not only of crime, but of misery, have been sensualists; and the highest intellectual powers have aided only in removing the illusions of worldly pleasure, and overclouding the soul with disgust and despair, so that a philosopher has said, that "a fool may, but a philosopher cannot, be a happy man." Our moral wants are our largest, and most urgent ones, and their neglect explains the existence of wretchedness amid every other gratification—in the palace as well as the hovel, with the sovereign and the sage, as well as the pauper and the slave. There is a higher gratification than that of sense; there is a higher exercise than that of thought. It is the satisfaction of the conscience and the exercise of the heart. God made man for intercourse with himself; all other exercises and enjoyments were to be but secondary to this. Prayer is the means of this intercourse; its language is the converse of this communion.

But it is consolatory in a second sense. It is a source of aid and security. The supplicating accents of prayer are authoritative to command for our aid the very attributes of the Deity. Prayer is the eloquence that persuades God. What would be the consciousness of a man invested with the attributes of the Almighty—omniscience to discern every danger, omnipotence to avert it, and a capability of universal presence to exert everywhere his wisdom and power for his interests! How fearlessly would he throw himself on every emergency! How tranquilly walk through every peril! Now the Christian has not these attributes, but his God has, and that God pledges their interference for him, in answer to prayer, in every case where their interference will be for his interests, that is, in every case where the Christian would exercise them himself, were he possessed of them. He may, therefore, feel as secure as if the powers of the Godhead were at his command! These powers may allow him to suffer, but no more than he himself would allow, if he had infinite wisdom to discern the propriety of such suffering. How sublime a spectacle is the praying man in this light! The stars may fall, and the worlds pass away, but he is safe, for the power which dissolves them, supports him. A devout mind, constant in the habit of prayer, may acquire such a lively sense of the immediate presence and sympathy of God as to exult in the most trying danger, and be almost superior to even the instinctive fears of human nature.

IV. *Prayer is a sublime exercise.* The reach of a mighty mind, transcending the discoveries of ages, and evoking to view new principles or new worlds, is sublime. Newton's discoveries, pushing human comprehension higher in the series of natural causes and effects, were sublime. But there may be a progress remaining, compared with which, his discoveries, as he said himself, are like the bubble compared with the ocean. But prayer sweeps over all secondary causes, and lays hold on the first cause; it bends not its flight to repose its wing, and refresh itself amid the light of undiscovered worlds, but rises above stars and suns, until it bathes its pinions in the light of "the excellent glory." To control the tremendous force of the elements, and reduce them to the servility of mechanical operations, is a sublime achievement. Men can thereby float in palaces on seas, carried by whirlwinds over fleeing mountains, or drive carriages, burdened with armies, through valleys and through hills, without animal effort, and as swift almost as light. But what is the control of the elements compared with the ability of prayer to call down the powers of heaven, and summon the agency of angels? It would be a circumstance of great sublimity for a man to be able to transmit his thoughts to a distant planet, and hold communion with its inhabitants; but prayer aspires above all worlds, and communes with the Infinite Mind. It rises above every subordinate reliance, and stops not till it throws itself into the embrace of the Father of all. One of the indirect but salutary effects of prayer arises from this sublime ascension of the soul above all things limited or caused, to the infinite. It approaches God; it stops only when all things else are lost from view, and the effulgence of Divinity alone shines "above, beneath, around." The mind cannot but imbibe sublimity from such a scene. A praying man ought, indeed, to be sublime—sublime in his sentiments and in his purposes; he holds perpetual intercourse with all grandeur. If the study of greatness, in its historical examples; if association with living men of greatness; if the intercourse of archangels, could tend to enlarge and elevate our sentiments, how much more ought the habitual contemplation and communion of God to improve us! The devout mind, gazing thus incessantly on Him in whose presence archangels gather strength, and bow with awe, cannot but grow mighty and sublime, and may go forth from the sanctuary of prayer reflecting the brightness of his countenance, like Moses, when the corrupt myriads fell back appalled as he came down from the "mount of communion."

CONCLUSION.

1. These views should lead us to estimate prayer as a privilege, not merely as a duty. How would it detract from the Christian system, if, with all its other provisions, it were destitute of this single feature! If the privilege of conversing with God in prayer were confined to one individual on our earth, with what a dignity and awe would it invest him among mankind! with what reverence would they contemplate him! with what entreaties and treasures would they implore his supplications! He would stand before the world higher than all sages or sovereigns. But this inestimable privilege is yours individually. Is it a less gracious provision because it is allowed to all?

2. Our interest in it may be considered a criterion of our piety. Religion, in its highest sense, is communion with God; prayer is the mode, the speech of this communion. Would we enter the presence of royalty with negligence? Would we address a benefactor, who has rescued us from destruction, with heartless accents? Would we gaze on the effulgent form of an angel without emotion? How, then, can we look up unto Him whom our sins have pierced without emotion, or address Him with indifference, "from whose face the earth and the heavens shall flee away, and no place be found for them?" Alas for that imbecility of our fallen nature, which, by the very frequency of our privileges, renders them desultory if not irksome!

SERMON XII.

Drawing near to God.

BY T. A. MORRIS, D. D.,

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"Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."—Heb. x, 22.

THE author of this epistle designed to prove to the Jews that Christ was the Son of God, the promised Messiah: that he was the Mediator of a better covenant, one founded on better promises, or promises of more excellent things, than the old covenant; and, consequently, that Christianity was preferable to the Jews' religion. Having completed the argument, and established his doctrine, he turns his attention to exhortation, which he introduces by presenting a summary view of the privileges of the Christian believer: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." Heb. x, 19, 20. The term boldness here is to be taken in the sense of liberty. The Jew had liberty to enter the most holy part of the temple once a year, through his representative, the priest, with the blood of atonement; but, under the Christian dispensation, all true believers may constantly come into the immediate presence of God—not by the legal sacrifice, but through the blood of the Son of God, as of a lamb without spot or blemish. The Christian comes "by a new and living way;" new, because it did not exist till Christ established it for us, and living, because they who walk therein live by the faith of the Son of God here, and have a good hope, through grace, of living for ever hereafter. This way of life was "consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh," or in other words, it was opened up and made plain before us, by the sacrificial death, triumphant resurrection, and glorious intercession, of Jesus Christ. The apostle continues thus: "And having a high priest over the house of God." The house of God means his church, or family of believers, whose only and all-sufficient priest is Jesus, who offered up himself as their sin-atoning sacrifice. "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities: but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Heb. iv, 14, 15. The exhortation in the text is founded on this encouraging view of the "better covenant," as if the apostle had said, in view of all these privileges secured to the Christian believer, "Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." Heb. x, 22. We shall speak

I. OF THE DUTY HERE ENJOINED.

The exhortation, "Let us draw near" to God, implies that we are far from him; though, in one view of the case, he is not far from every one of us. Infinite in all his perfections, God fills immensity, is everywhere beholding the evil and the good. Well might the Psalmist say, "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me." Psalm cxxxix, 7–11. But there is another sense in which we are far from God, namely, in regard to our condition as fallen creatures, which the prophet expresses thus: "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." Isaiah lix, 2. To draw near to God, therefore, in the sense of our text, is to seek him in the use of the appointed means of grace, that we may be restored to his favor and image, and enjoy a heartfelt sense of that restoration. And here we shall notice some of those occasions on which it is our privilege to draw near to God in a peculiar sense, as believers in Christ.

We draw near to God when we engage properly in the solemn exercises of publc worship. We do not mean to say, that merely attending the place of religious worship is an acceptable performance of this duty, for we may possibly come here for other reasons than to worship God. We may attend to pass off a tedious sabbath, to see a public assembly, to have agreeable company on the way, or through mere curiosity to hear a strange or popular preacher. Thus, while our bodies are here, our minds may be like the fool's eye, wandering to the ends of the earth. But we mean to say, if we come to the house of the Lord, as such, with a solemn sense of our responsibility to him, and remain, not as idle spectators, but as spiritual worshipers ; if we pray with the spirit and with the understanding also ; if we sing with the spirit and with the understanding also ; if we speak the simple truth as it is in Christ, and hear as in sight of his judgment-seat, then do we draw near to God in a peculiar sense, and he draws near to us.

Again, we draw near to God when we engage properly in the exercise of social worship. The blessing desired by a true worshiper does not depend on the presence of a multitude, as the Saviour assures us : "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Matt. xviii, 20. How often has this blessed promise of the Saviour been verified to a few brethren met in his name to pray and praise ; or in class meeting, to commune on the subject of religious experience, where the discouragements of one called forth the sympathy of the others, the deliverance of one from sin and unbelief excited the joy of all, and where they mutually contributed their influence to build each other up in their most holy faith! The delightful spiritual exercises of these social meetings often lead the mind to contemplate the heavenly state of rest, of peace and love ; and are really attended with a foretaste of it, while Jesus, in fulfillment of his promise, is present, in the power of his Spirit, and says, "Peace be unto you." Then indeed they draw near to God, and he draws near to them.

We also draw near to God, in a peculiar sense, when we engage properly in the exercise of secret devotion. To be associated with others in worshiping the Lord is pleasant and profitable, and those who enjoy the privilege should be thankful ; but it is no less cause of gratitude that each individual may for himself draw near, in the name of Jesus. Indeed, secret devotion is among the choicest of our blood-bought privileges. It affords opportunity for self-examination, and for the full expression of our faults and fears, our difficulties and sorrows, our wants and desires, without restraint or embarrassment. The hour of secret devotion is an honest hour, in which there are none to see or hear us but the Searcher of hearts, who cannot be deceived, and will not be mocked, but who is ever waiting to be gracious to such as confess their sins with sorrow, and throw themselves upon his mercy, in Christ Jesus. Private devotion has another advantage, from its frequent recurrence. The privileges of public and social worship are only occasional, but secret prayer secures "our daily bread," and affords the faithful Christian constantly "meat to eat" that the world knoweth not of. Indeed, many of his nearest approaches to the mercy-seat, and the brightest manifestations of the divine presence and glory, are realized in the closet, chamber, or grove, where he worships God alone. We come now to notice

II. HOW THIS DUTY MAY BE ACCEPTABLY PERFORMED.

Having spoken of some of the occasions on which we may draw near to God, we are now chiefly concerned as to the manner of performing that duty, and the motives and feelings which are to influence us therein. To draw near "with a true heart," means to worship God with sincerity, which is an indispensable ingredient in Christian piety. Insincerity is totally irreconcilable to the nature of saving faith. How can I have any confidence that a thrice holy God can hear and answer my prayer, unless I first persuade myself that prayer is sincere? It is morally impossible. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me," is as true now as it was in the days of David. But do not confound sincerity with worthiness: that is another thing altogether. If we wait for a blessing at the hand of God till we are worthy of it, we shall die unblessed, and be lost for ever. We have nothing to plead but the worthy name of Jesus, and we need no other, for he is all-sufficient; and while we pray in his name, we may know ourselves sincere, however unworthy. A man may know and feel that he has been a great sinner, and afterward be a true penitent; or a professor of religion may be fully aware of his past unfaithfulness and present unworthiness, and yet be perfectly sincere at present in his confessions and supplications, and therefore "draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith."

Faith is confidence, trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, as our only God and Saviour, for present pardon, continuous holiness, and everlasting life. The assurance of faith is a firm persuasion, a satisfactory evidence, that God does accept, pardon, save, and bless us, for Christ's sake; and this firm persuasion, this satisfactory evidence, arises, not only from the exceeding great and precious promises of his word, but chiefly from the direct influence of his Spirit, bearing witness with our spirit that we are his children. As to the peculiar phrase in the text, "full assurance of faith," it means simply, saving faith in its most vigorous exercise, so as to exclude all doubt, and amount to moral certainty. Whoever can say with the apostle, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," (2 Cor. v, 1,) has the full assurance of faith. Let it be observed, this is not an assurance founded on any supposed decree of election, that we shall unconditionally persevere and go to heaven, whether we retain faith or lose it; but it is simply an assurance that God now accepts us in Christ, and that if we die in this state we shall have a place in heaven. We have no doubt, therefore, but thousands of Christians in this day have all that the text means by the "full assurance of faith."

"Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience." We need not dwell on the term heart, which here means the seat of the affections; nor the term conscience, meaning that faculty in every man's breast which approves him when he does right, and condemns him when he does wrong, according to the best of his knowledge. But we will make a few remarks on the phrase, "an evil conscience," which means a guilty conscience, one polluted with sin. Hence the strong declaration of the apostle, "Even their mind and conscience is defiled." What is more tormenting to any man above ground than an evil conscience? There are some evils from which a man may escape; but shall a man flee from a guilty conscience? As well might he endeavor to escape from his shadow when the sun is shining. Wherever he goes, or whatever he does, he feels self-reproach and a sense of the displeasure of the Almighty. By night and noon his evil conscience haunts him, like a demon from the regions of darkness, so that he proves the truth of the declaration, "There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked." And if such be the state of the sinner's conscience here, what will be the state of it in the next world, where he reads all his history of folly, and views all his rebellious conduct in the light of eternity? There, we doubt not, every motion of his conscience will be like the gnawing of the deathless worm, or like the vulture rending the vitals. But it is matter of thankfulness that we are not there yet; that we are still the subjects of offered mercy, living in a gospel day and in a gospel land, favored with the drawings of the Father, the strivings of the Spirit, and the intercessions of the Saviour. Now let us accept the call of grace, yield to the overtures of dying love, be sprinkled from an evil conscience, and restored to the favor and image of God, that, like the apostle, we may "have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men."

"And our bodies washed with pure water," in Christian baptism. Many have received this in infancy and childhood. Those who have not, on being convinced of sin, and becoming penitent believers in Christ, should separate from the world, come over on the Lord's side, receive the initiating ordinance of baptism, and thereby be introduced to all the means of grace. As to the mode of administering, that is sufficiently indicated by the language of the text. Water baptism is an outward sign of the inward grace of purification. That inward grace of purification consists in "having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience" with the blood of Jesus, applied by the Holy Spirit, through faith; and in order that the washing of the body with the water of baptism may be a sign thereof, it should be applied by sprinkling also. "A word to the wise is sufficient."

III. A FEW BRIEF, PRACTICAL INFERENCES.

The first inference from the whole subject is, whoever neglects the means of grace, deprives himself of religious enjoyment. Let no man deceive himself, by supposing that he can willfully and habitually neglect the public, social, and private worship of God, his ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, and other means of grace, and still retain the favor of the Most High. He who is destitute of religion, and neglects these duties, will remain destitute; and he who has been converted, but subsequently neglects them, will forfeit his birthright, with all its enjoyments, and "the last state of that man is worse than the first." To all classes who persist in neglecting religious duties, the Judge will say at the last day, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

The next inference is, they who use the means of grace will profit thereby. The prophet Isaiah said, "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." Isa. xl, 31. The proper way of waiting on the Lord is to use diligently, perseveringly, and believingly, all the means of his appointing, and then humbly and patiently look to him for the end, with the assurance that, though he does not bless us *for* the use of the means, as a matter of merited reward, he delights to bless us *in* the use of them, for his Son's sake. While we use the means constantly, and in faith, we shall not fail to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. This may explain to the irreligious one thing, which often seems strange to them, namely, that we so frequently attend the house of prayer. We need "our daily bread," but cannot expect to receive, unless we ask for it; nor can we live without it. As well might we expect to keep up the health and vigor of the body without daily nourishment, as to obtain, or retain, the life of faith in the soul, without using the means of grace. It is also well ascertained by experience, as well as Scripture testimony, that it requires the same diligence and faith to retain the consolation of religion, that it does to obtain it in the first instance. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." Col. ii, 6.

Finally, we infer from this text, what is elsewhere plainly declared, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." This promise of James is given by inspiration, and may be safely confided in. It does not limit us to time, place, or any peculiar outward circumstances; but is of set purpose used in the most general sense. Wherever, whenever, and under whatsoever outward circumstances, we lift our hearts to God in faith and prayer, with humble reliance on the merits of Christ only, he will manifest himself in mercy to us, as he does not unto the world. Though the Lord is specially present in the house where prayer is wont to be made, he is everywhere waiting to be gracious; and is often found by his praying people amidst the busy multitudes that throng the streets of the city, and in the silent retreats of the wilderness. He often reveals the light of his reconciled countenance to his believing children, not only in the great congregation, or the select meeting for social worship, but also at their daily business, and sometimes when journeying in the mail coach, the steamboat, or flying car. Now suppose any true believer should claim this promise, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you," and plead it in faith, determined never to rest until it is verified in his case, how soon would he be filled with peace in believing and joy in the Holy Ghost! Then that man would have a revival of the work of God in his own soul. Again, suppose that all the believers in any given place should go and do likewise, then they would all have a revival. They would realize the precious promise of the Saviour, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." Matt. v, 6. And when the hearts of all believers are thus full of the love of God, what can stand before them? Trembling would seize the sinners in Zion, fearfulness would surprise the hypocrite, the seats of iniquity would be broken up, the strongholds of sin pulled down, the enemies of the cross would surrender at once, and plead for mercy, God's power would be present to heal, and souls by scores and hundreds would be born into the kingdom of Christ. May the Lord hasten this blessed work! Amen.

SERMON XIII.

Divine Providence.

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"The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them."—Psalm xxxiv, 7.

THERE was a notion among the Jews, and prevalent more or less, at different times, among Christians, that every saint has his guardian angel, specially commissioned by God to attend him in all his ways, comfort him in affliction, and protect him from danger. It has been supposed by some, that this passage gives countenance to that idea. I know that the Scriptures teach, in general terms, that "angels are ministering spirits sent forth to minister unto them that are heirs of salvation;" but I suppose the present passage is designed, according to the peculiar idiom of the Hebrew language, or after the manner of Eastern poetry, to teach a higher doctrine than the ministry of angels—that of the special providence of God. Behold! a greater than an angel is here! The almighty God himself, with his unnumbered instrumentalities, visible and invisible, encampeth, like a sentinel, round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.

Skepticism on the subject of divine providence lies at the foundation of all our impiety. It is the cause of shortcomings and deviations, of uneasiness, impatience, and fear, of murmurings and complainings, of meanness and illiberality, of duplicity and unfaithfulness, of envy and malice. A thorough conviction and abiding impression of its truth is essential to a full development of virtue, and a complete finish of Christian character.

Your attention, therefore, is invited to

I. A BRIEF DEFENSE; and

II. A SCRIPTURAL DEVELOPMENT, OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE SPECIAL PROVIDENCE OF GOD.

I shall not attempt here an argument with atheists, who deny altogether the existence of God; for, if we may believe the Psalmist, they have taken leave of reason: "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God." Such must be left to the chastening of that gracious Providence which they deny, until they are brought into a different state of mind, by a severe experience of the necessity of this innate and universal idea of unperverted reason.

There are those who believe in God, who regard him as a distant spectator of his creation. Like an artist, who has contrived a watch, or other ingenious machine, and hung it up to go of itself, for a limited time, without his interference, the Almighty, they suppose, has endued the world, the whole world of mind and matter, with established elements and processes, and left it to the guidance and control of regular laws. They not only affirm, therefore, there is no need of a special providence, but demand, whether we expect the regular laws of nature will be suspended, and miracles performed, for our particular benefit. We answer, that we expect no miracle wrought for our deliverance, when we call upon God to help us in time of trouble; but we suppose that God may employ the machinery he has created to bring about any special result within its capacity. That organ has given forth a vast variety of melodies and harmonies already, but under the hand of genius it may send out ten thousand more, now unknown and unconceived—and not a stop, nor a key, has been added or altered. Dr. Chalmers, in a sermon preached on the occasion of a public fast in Great Britain, answered this question by saying, that for aught we know, there is a chain of causes reverting from the sphere of our immediate observation up to the invisible throne, and the Almighty might strike any one of the links removed from human sight, and thereby operate through every intervening link to accomplish any particular purpose, within the range of our experience—and there be no knowledge of his interference only by its blessed results. We pray, and we receive things we ask for. Thus a widow, knowing her son at sea to be hovering about the coast in a tempestuous season, may go into her closet and pray that God would deliver him, without expecting a miracle in his behalf. How easy for the Almighty to move upon the elements far off, and a change be wrought in the stormy sea, in which is tossing the distracted ship, as if angels were pouring oil about her path! So the pious father, whose daughter is languishing with sickness in his sight, might lift up his heart to God without desiring a miracle for her recovery, for the Lord may breathe upon the infected air, and a salutary influence spread itself around her bed, quickening her pulse, reviving her spirits, and restoring the signal blush of health to her faded cheeks. Yes, we may admit the regularity of the laws of nature, and look for no interruption of them, till the last trump shall announce that heaven and earth are passing away, yet we need not shut the glorious Maker out of the world he has created; but rather proclaim with Paul to the philosophers of Athens, that he is "not far from every one of us, for in him we live, and move, and have our being."

2. Contemplating nature to find an objection to the doctrine of providence, we are reminded that mind, as well as matter, has its laws. A thought, long absent from the mind, comes up again—but not at random, it is governed by some law of association. The will indeed is free; but even the will has its laws; for example, it never acts without a motive—it can, indeed, resist the highest motives, but it always acts in the presence of motives. The operations of the mind, therefore, are indexes of correspondencies of some kind or other. Here, then, I see ground for an argument, not against, but in favor of, the special providence of God: it is particularly in the fact of the universal impression on the unsophisticated human mind, that there is a special providence which is always manifested vividly in times of peril and affliction. It was a favorite argument of the ancient philosophers for the immortality of the soul, that all men naturally desired to live hereafter. One of our dramatic poets has given us a touching view of their eloquent reasoning on this subject, in the scene of Cato, meditating suicide, as a refuge from the troubles of the times. He sits in his study, with a volume of Plato in one hand, and a drawn dagger in the other; and thus reasons:—

> "It must be so; Plato, thou reasonest well:
> Else, whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,
> This longing after immortality?
> Or whence this secret dread, this inward horror,
> Of falling into naught? Why shrinks the soul

> Back on herself, and startles at destruction?
> 'Tis the divinity that stirs within her:
> 'Tis heaven itself that points out an hereafter,
> And intimates eternity to man."

In like manner the inherent belief of providence, the spontaneous nature of the soul in prayer, in sudden emergency, or peril, denotes the fact to which it corresponds. Go where you will, you find men actuated by this belief. Prayer is a part of all religions. The Tartar in his travels across the desert, spreads out his praying machine, when he throws himself down in the shade of a rock to rest amid the heats of noonday, in the belief that the continual orisons thus offered will propitiate the favor of the Supreme Being, and secure protection against the wild beasts or the banditti of the desert. The Indians of North America, the most unsophisticated of all the tribes of the heathen—the true sons of nature—have a most controlling apprehension of divine providence. It is said that those residing about the Falls of Niagara were accustomed, in times of danger or disaster, to throw their corn or tobacco into the river to propitiate the favor of the spirit having power over evil, who, they supposed, had his throne amid the roar and foam of the stupendous cataract.

3. Looking up from man, the image of God, to the great original himself, we see in the attributes of God, as recognized by reason, the broadest foundation for the doctrine of providence. God is not only a being of infinite goodness, but he is an omniscient and omnipresent being. All things, past, present, and future, are spread out before him as a map, and he is himself present in every place. I do not mean that with God there is no succession of events, no distinction of past, present, and future. The doctrine of eternal now, which has the sanction of Dr. Clarke and some other eminent divines, appears to me a palpaple absurdity. It is, in the first place, a contradiction in terms. Eternal now! What is eternity? Endless duration. What is now? A point of time. How preposterous to unite such terms! There is the same contradiction in fact. If God is living in an eternal now, he is acting there; consequently, he is at this moment making the world out of nothing, and preserving it by his word, and burning it with fire; before him man is not made and

he is made at this moment. Is not this absurd? How can a thing be and not be at the same time? Then there is an endless repetition of the same contradictions. The world is created and destroyed at this moment, created and destroyed the next moment, and the next, and so on to infinity. It is no answer to say, that we cannot reason on the nature of an infinite being, as we do upon the nature of a finite. What is this but confessing that they have got beyond their depth? To common sense, an eternal now appears an absurdity; why then should we imagine it may be otherwise? It is contrary to all we do know, and we have nothing to do with what is beyond.

The true idea of omniscience is, that God knows all things that were, and are, and shall be, in all their parts, and conditions, and relations, for ever. And the true idea of omnipresence is, that God is in all parts of his universe at this moment, and will be the next moment, and so on for ever. Taking then this view of him, in connection with his infinite goodness, and the conclusion is manifest and unavoidable. God is with me, he knows me altogether, he has made all my conditions and adaptations, and how can he otherwise than care for me? Is not special providence, therefore, of the very necessity of his nature? This is all we can ever wish to know. Hence the Psalmist: "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there: if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me and thy right hand shall hold me."

And then let me ask, what in reality are those regular laws of nature, about which philosophy talks so proudly? What, but the uniform movements of the omnipresent power? Has matter any life, or energy, or motion, of itself? Men talk of attraction and gravitation, of rolling planets and revolving spheres; but what are all these without the all-sustaining, living agency? Not that creatures have no existence distinct from the Creator, and "all are but parts of one stupendous whole." This is transcendentalism. But God pervades, actuates, upholds all by his power. The sun describes his pathway in the heavens, and the noise of the tempest announces that he is nigh.

"Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known."

II. Having considered the reasonableness of the doctrine of providence, we are now ready to contemplate it as developed in the Scriptures.

1. The common distinction of general and particular providence has no more existence than this, that general providence may apply to the uniform operations of divine power as manifested in the changes of day and night, and the revolutions of the seasons, upon which men may make certain calculations; and particular providence is manifested in results, which could not be certainly anticipated; as when a sailor is taken from a wreck at sea by a passing ship, or a poor man is favored by a happy turn of business. Generalization is the expedient of mental weakness, which cannot attend to many particulars at once;—but "our God," as Wesley said, on another occasion, "is a very particular God." Every individual thing is as fully in his view, as if he gave it his exclusive attention. He not only lays his hand upon the mighty wheels of nature, but directs every operation. He controls the revolution of the comet, as it doubles heaven's wide cape, and returns regularly after a long lapse of a thousand years, and directs the seemingly random whirl of the atom in the air. He equally supports the archangel, the lifting up of whose wing brightens half heaven, and guides the insect that flits in the sunbeam. The common language of the Scripture is not poetry merely, but plain philosophy; not an idiom in the speech of the Hebrew, but the simple language of truth. Thus David: "By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation; who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea: which by his strength setteth fast the mountains; being girded with power: which stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people. They also that dwell in the uttermost parts are afraid at thy tokens: thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice. Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: thou settlest the

furrows thereof; thou makest it soft with showers; thou blessest the springing thereof. Thou crownest the year with thy goodness, and thy paths drop fatness. They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness: and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing." Psa. lxv, 5–13.

Mark how specific is the language of the great Teacher. It is a part of his solemn counsels given to his apostles on the occasion of first sending them out to preach the gospel to the tribes of Israel: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, yet not one of them is forgotten before God." St. Luke xii, 7. Here is no poetry—nor in the same assertion as recollected by another of his delighted and inspired hearers: "And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father." Matt. x, 29. But there is a still more affecting particularity in the words which follow: "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." A hair is the most insignificant part of our bodies; having no nerve, it is insensible to pain—it is burnt, or bruised, and we feel it not; it withers and falls upon the air, and we take no note of it; but not so the all-seeing Maker. How comforting is this thought in view of the dissolution of these bodies in the grave! Their particles are scattered through the air, earth, and sea—not an angel in heaven may know where they are deposited; but there is One who holds distinctly in view all the elements of nature.

> "And ever from the skies
> Looks down and watches all our dust,
> Till he shall bid it rise."

2. This leads me directly to remark further, that the providence of God is effectual. It is pledged to protect those that trust in him from all evil. Not that the people of God shall be exempted from afflictions, nay, they are often plunged into tribulations in consequence of their righteous principles. But afflictions, in the view of Heaven, are not evils. Nothing is an evil which is a means of contributing to an unspeakably greater good, which would not otherwise be gained. Millions of grain have been cast into the earth this year, enough, throughout the world, to feed a nation; but it is no calamity when we know it yields

the abundance of autumn and winter. In this sense, St. Paul affirms that "all things work together for good to them that love God." If we grieve, then, under the afflictions of life, it is because we look at ourselves as we are in the passing moment of time; but the apostle contemplates us in the unfoldings of an immortal nature, and blends in one view the interests of time and eternity. Comprehending the happy and harmonious bearings of the parts upon each other and upon the whole, he declares, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours."

In this inventory of our effects, as Christians, you observe he mentions "death." This is regarded as the greatest of earthly evils; so, indeed, it would be, contemplated by itself. But "death is yours," because it is made to contribute infinitely to your welfare. But how? In our present constitution an immortality on earth would be at the expense of a heaven distant and God invisible. But death opens the gates of immortality, "and being absent from the body we are present with the Lord." Ask the brother who dies to-day, what he thinks of death; O, he exclaims, death is mine! behold I am here in glory; I see God! Thus, in one view, our "light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

So with all other things. Who, then, would dare to reverse any one of God's doings? Is not everything just as we ourselves would choose, had we infinite wisdom? Who, then, are you that are in trouble, and are tempted to murmur? Should an angel from heaven pause at the door of your dwelling to hearken, would he not be ready to break through upon you with rebuke, "How, now, ye heirs of immortality! has not God said, All is yours?"

> "Shall that which rises out of naught complain
> Of a few evils, paid with endless joys?"

3. But it is necessary to add, that the providence of God is discriminating. It has respect to character, and blesses not the righteous and the wicked in like manner. It is true, "our heavenly Father sends his rain upon the

just and the unjust;" but it is with a different end. He visits the wicked with benefits, that he may soften and subdue his heart—"The goodness of God leadeth to repentance." But if the wicked man persevere in his revolt from God, he takes himself away from his beneficent providence—he will not suffer God to bless him in the only way in which a holy God can bless. His doom, therefore, shall be the reverse of the destiny of the righteous. It will be said of him, "It had been better for this man if he had not been born."

Let no one, therefore, be deceived by present appearances. It was by this that an inspired ancient came near the verge of destruction—"But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as with a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness; they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth. Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High? Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning. If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image. Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee." Psa. lxxiii, 2–22.

In conclusion, I have need to say first to the young: Be it impressed upon your minds, as you are about shaping your course for life, that there is no sound policy which does not begin with the fear of God. Satan will teach you otherwise, and for a time he may busy himself to fulfill his sayings. He will take the part of the husbandman in the parable, and dig about the tree, and do all in his power to make it bear fruit. Your roots may strike deep and your boughs spread out widely; but, beware! in an evil day he will come upon you, set a fire in your branches, and consume you down to the ground. "I have seen the wicked," says David, "in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree, yet he passed away; and, lo! he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found." Psa. xxxvii, 35, 36.

On the other hand, if you make God your portion, he will make your present and everlasting welfare to harmonize, and every earthly blessing shall be yours, the withholding of which would not contribute more highly to your eternal well-being. Well do I recollect how rich I felt, when, soon after my conversion, the doctrine of providence was opened to my mind. I felt myself brought into alliance with infinite Good, and in Christ both earth and heaven was my inheritance.

To my Christian brethren I have only to say, that to enjoy fully the providence of God, you have need of a strong and comprehensive faith, which will pierce the clouds that often involve our present state, and grasp the connections of time and eternity. On this point you are now on trial. Often you will be in circumstances bearing a threatening aspect—it is your duty, then, to believe God's word—and hope against hope; for, in all events, "God is for you." I have, somewhere, met with a story of a naval officer, who took his companion with him in one of his voyages. A storm came up. In the midst of it, one came to him on deck, and told him his wife, through fear, had fallen into hysterical fits, and if he wished to see her alive he must go to her relief. As he ascended the cabin stairway, he was at a loss what to do; he could not be spared from duty to the ship but a moment at such a time as that. A happy thought struck him. As he approached her, lying upon the floor convulsed with terror, he drew his sword, and, with a threatening look, pointed it at her bosom, and demanded, sternly, "if she was not afraid of that?" Astonished at such a movement from her husband, she collected herself for a moment, and, looking up into his face, she said, "Afraid of that! no, for it is in the hands of my husband, who has always loved me." "Well," said he, lifting up his sword and changing the tone of his voice, "this storm is in the hands of God, and he has always loved us!" The effect was instant, her mind was composed. He returned to his duty, and the ship was saved. Thus, while you are in this pilgrimage, the storm will gather over you with all its terrors, and the sword will be pointed at your breast—but, fear not, your Redeemer walks amidst the tempest, and the sword is in the hand of one who loves your for ever. Have faith in God. Amen.

SERMON XIV.

The Good and Faithful Servant.

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"His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."—Matt. xxv, 21.

It was a custom in the East for masters to furnish their servants with a certain amount of capital to be employed in traffic, and, at a given time, an examination was made that the proceeds might be given to the master, and the diligent and successful servant duly rewarded. Our Saviour seized upon this fact to illustrate more fully some of the prominent characteristics of the government of God. Talents—means and facilities for doing good—are given to all. To some are given five talents, to others two, to others one, "to every man according to his several ability." Having prescribed the appropriate work of every man, "straightway" the master "took his journey." "After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them." A just and impartial examination was made, and the future condition of the servants depended upon their moral character, as developed by their conduct. To the good and faithful servant it was said, "Enter thou into the joy of thy lord;" but to the wicked and slothful servant, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

The general sentiment of the parable is, that the interests of the kingdom of Christ are committed to his church, and that her responsibility is commensurate to her ability. The Jewish church, which had been the chosen instrumentality to carry out the great purposes of God toward the human race, were about to be rejected, and the Christian church to resume her responsibility. The Christian church was to become "the light of the world," "the city upon a hill," the central nation, around which the world was to gather. She was to become responsible for the universal dissemination of divine truth; and hence, to prepare her for fidelity in her work, different courses of conduct, and their results, are placed before her.

Our text presents,

I. THE CHARACTER; and

II. THE REWARD, OF THE SERVANT WHO WILL BE COMMENDED BY HIS LORD.

I. *The character.*

1. The term, *servant*, shows the relation which the disciple of Christ sustains, and the epithets, *good* and *faithful*, his moral characteristics. *Good* and *goodness* are used in different senses. We say that fruit is good, when it is agreeable to the sense of taste. An article of husbandry is good, when it is happily adapted to the purposes for which it was constructed. Goodness, as existing in the Deity, embraces that principle which leads the divine Being to bestow blessings upon his creatures. Goodness, as applied to man, must be taken in a restricted sense; it refers to the moral qualities of his heart. It consists in the possession of the Christian graces. The apostle has enumerated, "Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity." The supposed possession of any one grace gives us no right to

profess Christian goodness. The apostle says, "add," ἐπιχορηγήσατε, *lead up*, alluding to the chorus in the Grecian dance, where they danced with joined hands. The allusion is a beautiful one, showing the intimate connection existing between the graces of the Spirit. Where one truly exists, they all exist, and nearly in the same strength and maturity. Christian goodness is necessarily associated with Christian holiness. It not merely implies a state in which the sympathies of human nature are easily excited, and lead to acts of kindness toward the bereaved and distressed, but in which fruit is shown unto holiness, and the end eternal life. It is not a mere negative state, in which there is no marked development of unsanctified nature, but the good man, like ancient Barnabas, is full of faith and the Holy Ghost. When the work of creation was completed, from the beauty and harmony of the parts, and their perfect adaptation to accomplish the divine purposes, everything was pronounced to be *very good*. No higher appellation could be given. And man now becomes good, only so far as, by the renewal of the Holy Ghost, he bears the impress of his original nature. So long as sin is a cherished object in his heart, there is not a moral feature in man pleasing to God. The Being of infinite holiness can delight in no principle opposed to his nature. Earth becomes lovely, only as it reflects the pure image of heaven.

We are now prepared to appreciate this characteristic of the servant whom God loves. It is a household grace, adapted to every changing circumstance, and to every occasion. Some of the Christian graces seem not to enter into every act of life, but are called out on peculiar emergencies. Patience and resignation exhibit themselves only under the ills of life, or in the dark hour of adversity; but Christian goodness, from whatever position it is viewed, is alike conspicuous.

Goodness is essential to produce a Christian influence. The exhibition of talent of the highest order reproves not the unsanctified heart. The cultivation of the intellect is not necessarily associated with moral culture. The wisdom of sages is vastly removed from the wisdom of God. It is as true now as formerly, "the world by wisdom knows not God." "Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."

Wealth and honor, which command such respect and influence among men, possess not, in themselves, an attribute of Christian power. And, indeed, by general consent, they are arrayed against Christian virtue, until by special consecration they are devoted to God.

Patriotism and natural fortitude, however much they have accomplished to improve the civil and social condition of man, have wholly failed to make him morally good. We have heard of the Roman, who, to show that he could not be dispirited by fear, or intimidated by suffering, calmly placed his right hand upon the burning altar, and there steadily held it, without emotion, until it was consumed. We have heard also of the distinguished martyr of whom it was said, "In an unguarded and unhappy hour he had subscribed to doctrines which he did not believe; an act which he afterward deeply repented of, as the greatest miscarriage of his life. And when he was subsequently led to the stake, he stretched out the hand which had been the instrument in this false and discreditable subscription, and, without betraying, either by his countenance or motions, the least sign of weakness, or even of feeling, he held it in the flames till it was entirely consumed." In the one case we admire the man, in the other the moral principles of his heart. Though the acts were similar, the one showed the martial man, the other the good man.

A deficiency in natural endowments does not in every case essentially weaken the moral influence, but even the least suspicion of moral delinquency effectually destroys it. Let a man exhibit, if possible, the purity of angelic character in every particular except in one; let it be seen that in his dealings with men he has a greater regard to his personal interests than he has to the principle of equity, and all his good deeds will be passed by for naught, because in failing in one radical principle, he has failed to obtain the reputation of the good man. But let a person possess the infirmities of human nature in an uncommon degree, and yet always exhibit the purest intention, the virtues of his heart will be taken, even by a caviling world, as a ready apology for the errors of his life. In defending the cause of truth, and presenting its claims, there may be a thousand errors; in his logic yet if he has acquired the title of God's good servant, the argument would hardly be weakened. It is thus that "God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty." It is the eloquence of the life, more than the eloquence of the tongue, that is now demanded for the advancement of truth.

Place the good man in those circumstances in which worldly principles show their insufficiency, and mark his influence. See him the scoff of the world, and the bearer of its hate; his worldly prospects blighted, and his pleasures mingled with bitter tears. No dark frown settles upon his features as he thinks of the providence of God. No sad murmurings that his circumstances are so different from his neighbors. No hard judging of God from one isolated act of his government. No desolation of heart, though the sources of his temporal enjoyments are diminished.

> "As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
> Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,
> Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
> Eternal sunshine settles on its head."

Place the Christian in affliction, and then you will see his moral worth.

> "Affliction is the good man's shining scene!
> Prosperity conceals his brightest ray,—
> As night to stars, wo lustre gives to man."

2. *The faithful servant.* Christian fidelity may be distinguished by the general characteristics exhibited by a faithful temporal servant. He feels a common interest with his Lord. The mere hope of reward is not the governing motive which inspires him to action. He marks not the sun's decline, and languishes for the last expiring ray, but

> "Glad to pray and labor on,
> Till his earthly course is run."

Such is the identity between Christ and his faithful servants, that they not only bear his moral image, but enter into his plans, take in, as far as humanity allows, the same general view, and adopt the same measures which Christ has employed for the universal spread of the gospel. A heart less imbued with true Christian sympathy might inquire what must be done, while carrying out worldly plans, and gratifying an unsanctified ambition, to make salvation certain; but, to God's faithful servant, the question is not merely a personal one, relating to his own salvation, but where, in the great system of agencies, is his appointed sphere of labor for the world's salvation.

Christian fidelity is not to be tested by the amount of labor performed, but by the degree of devotion to the appointed work. One man, by superior endowments, may far surpass another in the amount of labor, and yet not exhibit greater Christian fidelity. The two mites of the widow were valued more highly by Christ than the offerings of wealth. Heaven estimates our gifts, not by their magnificence and splendor, but by the prayers and tears by which they have been consecrated.

The faithful servant loves his work. The manifestation of the least distaste is evident proof of rebellion. It shows that either the commands of the Lord are unjust, or the servant is wanting in true Christian feeling. A friend may anticipate all our desires, and show marked attention to all our wants, and yet if we doubt the perfect cordiality with which it is rendered, it is far from rendering us happy. To make us happy, the friend must show that he *loves* to make us happy. Christ requires the same principles.

> "For what are outward things to thee,
> Unless they spring from love?"

The spirit of sacrifice is necessarily connected with Christian fidelity. It is pure selfishness which prompts to action when present enjoyment merely is to be secured. Though every temporal interest should be sacrificed—life become a scene of affliction and toil—obstacles of fearful magnitude arise on every side, yet motives of these kinds are to be but little heeded when the line of Christian duty is clearly drawn. The incentive of visible success is not to be required.

> "Great minds, like Heaven, are pleased with doing good,
> Though the ungrateful subjects of their favors
> Are barren in return."

The servant is not called to enter the field to mark the different results attending the various agencies employed, but to cast his bread upon the waters, and attend to the specific duties required by his master.

II. *The reward.*

The reward consists in a grateful commendation, and in the bestowment of the highest positive blessings. The Persic version paraphrases the passage: "The owner of the money received him pleasantly, and uttered words to him grateful to his heart, saying, Well done, thou good and faithful servant." The term *εὖ*, *well done*, was used by the spectators at the ancient games to denote applause, and in the text it is used as an outburst of delighted feeling. The encomium was pronounced wholly in view of his moral qualities—he had been a good and faithful servant. To be commended for possessing great talents would be no high distinction. In such a commendation even the evil spirits might share, for they excel in strength. To be commended for the possession of wealth, or worldly influence, would constitute no part of the reward of the righteous. Examined by this standard, some of the most depraved would claim the highest honors, for they have enriched their coffers from every clime, and ruled the destinies of nations. Even acts of charity, unless prompted by Christian principle, have no high moral value. It is a truth which should be deeply impressed upon every heart, no man will be commended at last but for his moral and religious worth. The moral qualities of those who have attained everlasting felicity are alone made prominent. They were *just* men made perfect, those who had *washed* their robes, and made them *white* in the blood of the Lamb. Their temporal circumstances are rarely referred to, unless to show the power of their faith, and, by contrast, the magnitude of their reward. As the idea has been so prevalent, that temporal prosperity is a sure concomitant of internal purity, the examples of heavenly enjoyments are taken from the lowly and afflicted. Those arrayed in white robes, "came out of great tribulation." Good Lazarus was borne from crumbs to a festival—from the rich man's gate to Abraham's bosom.

The commendation of the good servant was pronounced in view of his life as a whole. We may feel great complacency in reviewing a portion of our life: it may have been characterized by ardent Christian efforts, and holy aspirations after God; yet such are the moral obliquities which deface another portion, that we turn away with disgust from our inconsistencies. A knowledge of the power of interest, of sense, and of passion, diminishes the joy arising from actions well performed; for, amid the rejoicings of conscious integrity, we have a foreboding of future relapse. Many, indeed, seem to depend upon one portion of life to give character and value to the whole; as though the virtues of one period would cancel the vices of another. How different with the good and faithful servant!

> "Behold him! in the evening tide of life,
> A life well spent, whose early care it was
> His riper years should not upbraid his green,
> By unperceived degrees he wears away,
> Yet, like the sun, seems larger at his setting."

Every act of life will be reviewed, every influence, direct and remote, will be considered. Sin will appear no less hateful because it was committed by one consecrated to a better work; nor will its results be less disastrous.

The Lord, in pronouncing the joyous plaudit, reminds the servant of the vast disparity between the work and the reward: "Thou hast been faithful over a *few* things, I will make thee ruler over *many* things." The trust committed to God's servant, however responsible, relates only to a few things; the sufferings to which it exposes him are few, but the enjoyments to be received are many. Every spiritual sense, every act of the divine administration in the kingdoms of nature, providence, and grace, will be a source of joy. The height of the enjoyment is denoted by the greatest contrast in earthly condition—the *servant* becomes a *ruler*. The apostle presents the same view: "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Mark the strength of the antithesis. On the one hand, *affliction*, on the other, *glory*—*light* affliction, a *weight* of glory—light affliction for a *moment*, an *eternal* weight of glory.

The final felicity of the good man is represented by his entering into "the joy of his Lord." Heaven is here represented under the figure of a banquet. Pignorius informs us that the word *joy* was inscribed on the eastern banqueting rooms. How indescribably glorious is the future state of the good man! The day of painful labor is closed; the tumults of passion are hushed; the highest wish of the devout heart is crowned—the good man has entered into the joy of his Lord. There is nothing in the nature of Christian effort revolting to sanctified affection, so that the highest degree of Christian virtue would be unwilling to be employed in it, even for ever, if such were the will of God; but as labor is required merely as a means of attaining future good, the consecrated man rejoices that he has accomplished the design of his being, and secured the highest pleasure of his heavenly Father. He rejoices in heaven, not as pure selfishness rejoices in the accomplishment of its ends, but in a state where he may exhibit more perfectly the moral image of his Redeemer, and can serve, with a strength and ardor before unknown, the Ruler of the universe.

To impress the more vividly the glories of heaven upon Christians, the most cherished objects were employed. Were the temple and its service to some associated with everything sacred and delightful—to such it was said, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out." Had any been subject to severe affliction, constant alarms, and heart-rending partings—to them the type of supreme felicity was a state in which "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes," where "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." Did any associate the ornaments of wealth with perfect delight—the abode of the righteous was a city whose walls were jasper, whose foundations were "garnished with all manner of precious stones," whose gates were "pearls," whose streets were "pure gold," and whose light was "the glory of God and the Lamb." Had rural scenery peculiar charms for any—to them heaven was a garden of delights, where flowed "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal." On the banks of the river grew "the tree of life," whose diversified fruit would gratify every taste, "which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." The instructed mind will see in all these descriptions, that the future state of the good man is designed to be represented as superlatively glorious.

Such are the inducements to become good and faithful servants. As infinitely glorious and desirable as everlasting life is, it can be secured only by moral purity and unceasing efforts. The least defect in the radical principles of the heart will vitiate any title we may have claimed to the heavenly inheritance.

> "O that each from his Lord may receive the glad word,
> Well and faithfully done!
> Enter into my joy, and sit down on my throne."

SERMON XV.

The Divinity of Christianity demonstrated in the Conversion of St. Paul.

BY REV. JOHN H. POWER, D. D.,

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"And he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."—Acts ix, 6.

THE history of this subject presents us with a humiliating picture of the depravity and wickedness of man; and also an exalted view of the wisdom, goodness, and saving power of God. When the prophecies of the Old Testament had been fulfilled in the glorious person, holy teaching, and sublime works, of Jesus Christ—the promise of God realized in the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and thousands were converted and went forth in their redeemed and renewed character, breathing the spirit of "peace on earth, and good-will to men"—it might have been expected that they would have been received by society with acclamations of joy, and honored as the best portion of our race. Such, however, was not the fact; but, on the contrary, the wicked multitude appear to have sought their extermination from the earth. The first one of the disciples of Christ who fell a victim to this outbreaking of the depravity and wickedness of man was the inoffensive and pious Stephen; and among his murderers we find the person whose character is brought to view in the subject before us. But while we mourn over the folly and cruelty of man, in his opposition to God and his own best interests, in this and the future world, we can with gratitude admire the wisdom and goodness of God, in confounding the wisest counsels, defeating the most malevolent designs of man, and not unfrequently rescuing, from the wreck of his most cherished earthly hopes, his immortal spirit by the power of divine grace. A striking example of this we have in the case of Saul of Tarsus, as presented in the text. To render this subject of as great practical use as possible, your attention will be directed to the following particulars:

I. THE FACT THAT SAUL WAS THE SUBJECT OF AN ENTIRE CHANGE IN FAITH AND PRACTICE ON THE SUBJECT OF MORALS AND RELIGION. And,

II. THAT THIS CHANGE DEMONSTRATES THE DIVINITY OF THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST, OR GOD'S METHOD OF REFORMING AND SAVING SINNERS.

III. THE CONDUCT OF SAUL, UNDER THE DIVINE ADMINISTRATION, STRIKINGLY EXEMPLIFIES THAT OBEDIENCE WHICH EVERY MAN OWES TO THE BLESSED SAVIOUR.

It will not be necessary to spend much time on the first member of this subject, with regard to the great change wrought on Saul. This will be made sufficiently clear by collecting a few facts from the Scriptures bearing on his case, *before* and *after* the moral position in which we find him presented in the text now under consideration.

And first, some facts before his visit to Damascus. In regard to his faith, he was a rigid Pharisee; and, as such, confined salvation to the Jews alone, and such as were proselyted to their faith. He believed in the *merit* of works; that salvation was secured, meritoriously, by the observance of Jewish rites, traditions, and ceremonies. He utterly rejected Jesus Christ, as an impostor; maintaining that his violent death was but a righteous retribution for his blasphemy; and that his followers deserved a similar fate for the same cause. With regard to practice, he was equally removed from the religion of the God of love; being, according to his own showing, "in ignorance and unbelief, a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious." "And beyond measure persecuted the church of God, and wasted it." "And being exceeding mad against Christians, he persecuted them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme, and persecuted them even unto strange cities, and when they were put to death he gave his voice against them." By these deeds of daring cruelty to the unoffending and unprotected disciples of the blessed Saviour, Saul "made havoc of the infant church, entering into every house of the disciples, and, haling men and women, committed them to prison." How deep must be the corruption of his heart, and how dark his understanding, who can suppose that the Being, whose nature is love, and whose tender mercies are over all his works, can be delighted with such service as Saul attempted to render! that he requires his servants to hate their fellow-men, and compel them to blaspheme! that he requires them to persecute and murder those who cannot, or will not, conform to their dictations in matters of religion! But such were the views, and such the religion, of Saul. In the blindness of his zeal, in the boldness of his bigotry, he stopped not to consider the injury done to civil society by the death of its best citizens. He paused not to reflect on the sacred rights of conscience. The horrors of prisons, filled, without distinction of circumstance or sex, with the suffering saints of God, reached not his sympathies. He was unmoved by a mother's tears, or a child's tenderness. He cared not for the sighs and sorrows of parents, made childless by the martyrdom of their offspring; nor the anguish of children, made orphans by the murder of their parents; but rushed on, in his hostility to Christ and his followers, with a recklessness which seemed to glory only in the anguish and ruin of others. And let it be remembered, friends, that this is not a peculiarly aggravated case of human depravity, but only a fair specimen of the corruption of our race; which, under similar circumstances, would be equally cruel. And the very fact that all these enormities were practiced under the impulses of a blind and bigoted religion, and that the author of them, though possessed of great power of intellect and unbending regard for integrity, was so infatuated and led away with his blind zeal that his conscience was insensible of the wrong, so that while slaying the followers of Christ he thought he was doing God service, and was living in all good conscience toward God, indicates the fearful depth of depravity in the nature of man. How humiliating the thought, that, morally, man has departed so far from his Maker! But we are approaching a period in the history of this remarkable man in which the scene is changed, and divine grace triumphs over the wickedness of man. "And Saul, yet breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus, to the synagogue, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem." Thus clothed with authority, and animated with the hope of success in his cruel mission against the disciples of the Saviour, he sets out for Damascus. And where all the circumstances of the case would seem to call for the retributions of Heaven, He, who is long-suffering and of tender compassion, meets him in mercy; and we find Saul, "trembling and astonished," supplicating the mercy of Christ, whom he had blasphemed, and whose disciples he had martyred. We notice, therefore, in the second place, some facts in the case of Saul, at the time of, and subsequently to, his visit to Damascus.

1. In relation to his faith, we see an entire change. Renouncing Judaism, he receives Christ, "the only name given under heaven among men whereby he could be saved;" "counting all things but loss for the sake of Christ," and trusting alone to faith in the merits of Christ for salvation, he now seeks for holiness of heart and life, without which he could not see God, could not be saved in heaven.

2. With regard to practice, the change in Saul is not less clear. From a blasphemer of Christ, he becomes an humble penitent, praying to Christ; believing in him to the saving of his soul. "Therefore, being justified by faith, he had peace with God." He is regenerated: "The Spirit bears witness with his, that he is a child of God." He makes a public profession; takes upon him all the obligations of Christianity in the ordinance of baptism; and consecrates himself to Christ, in unreserved obedience, in all things, at all times, in every circumstance, through life, in death, and through all eternity. Therefore, in dismiss-

ing this point, we remind you of a few features of the case that have passed in review before us. We see the bigoted Pharisee become a firm believer in Jesus Christ; the man who so recently blasphemed the blessed Saviour, now recognizing him as the supreme object of his worship; the heart so lately filled with pride and arrogance, melted into profound contrition; the soul burdened with guilt, now set at liberty; he who had hated the disciples, now embracing them as beloved brethren in Christ; he who had wasted the church, now building her walls; he who had opposed the gospel, now proclaiming its sublime truths. Finally, he who had martyred others for their faith in Christ, is martyred for the same cause. Who, therefore, can doubt that Saul of Tarsus was the subject of a universal change of faith, practice, and heart? We pass to notice the second member of this subject, namely,—

II. *That the change in Saul demonstrates the divine character of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The conversion of Saul will ever be a source of encouragement to awakened sinners, and of rejoicing to pious Christians; while on the other hand, it has been, and still will be, an occasion of great offense to bigoted Pharisees, skeptics, and infidels. The former look upon it as a merciful display of the supernatural and saving grace of God; the latter, as a striking exhibition of human weakness, either of hypocrisy, fanaticism, or superstition. This fact was illustrated soon after Saul's conversion, in his defense before Agrippa. While he related his experience with an "unction" that "almost persuaded the king to become a Christian," the pride and infidelity of Festus determined him to account for it on other grounds than that of the grace of God; and he exclaimed, "with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad." My brethren, the issue is joined, and the moral conflict is in progress. Could infidelity disprove the divinity of Saul's conversion, its triumph would be great; but while this stands as a cheering instance of the saving power of God, and the church is faithful to her holy calling, its final defeat is inevitable. In showing, in our way, that the conversion of Paul was emphatically the work of God, we may subject ourself to the charge of cold formality; but this is a small matter, compared with the importance of a plain exhibition of divine truth. To make this point plain, it may be stated, without fear of successful contradiction, that his conversion was either real and divine, or it was delusive—a deception. If this conversion was a delusion, which infidelity, in its various modifications, maintains, it follows of necessity, that Saul was either the deceived, or the deceiver; that by some agency or other advantage was taken of him, and he was converted into an enthusiast, or a fanatic; or that he feigned or affected this change in order to deceive others. Let us see if there are reasons to believe that he was deceived. If such was the fact, his deception must be considered in the light of an *effect*, and must, of necessity, be dependent on an adequate cause. To suppose the contrary is perfectly unreasonable, is preposterous and absurd. On this supposition, it may not be uninteresting to inquire whether Saul was a probable subject to be transformed so suddenly into an enthusiast, or a fanatic. Few, if any, will doubt that generally, if not always, fanaticism finds its victims and does its work among the less intellectual and less informed of mankind—those who know least of themselves, least of men and things with which they are surrounded, least of the world in which they live. But was this the character of Saul? By no means; but just the reverse. His whole history shows him to have been a man of the first grade of intellect, and not less distinguished for his attainments in the science and literature of the age in which he lived; while for firmness and energy of character he was, if possible, still more remarkable, presenting a character least likely of all others to be deluded into a belief in Jesus Christ, whom he so ardently abhorred, and the love and fellowship of his disciples, whom he so violently persecuted and martyred. The man that can believe this, can believe not only without evidence, but in the face of demonstration to the contrary. But, furthermore, on the assumption that Saul was deceived, there must have been a deceiver. Of this no one can doubt. Who, then, was the deceiver? To cover the whole ground, and leave none for doubt or evasion, we remark:—If he was deceived, it must have been either by the divine Being, or by angels, or by men. But the bare mention of the first alternative is a sufficient refutation. The thought, indulged for a moment, that the

Lord can deceive, is blasphemy! And if Saul was deceived by angels or men, another consequence follows to an absolute certainty—namely, that they were either morally good or bad agents, whether angels or men. But to suppose that good men or angels could deliberately plan and pass a deception upon man, is not only in opposition to every principle of the moral code of the Bible, and in violation of every enlightened conscience, but it involves a perfect absurdity, a moral impossibility, inasmuch as it supposes an honest deceiver—a truthful liar—a pious hypocrite! And hence skepticism has no alternative, on the assumption that he was deceived, but that he was deluded into a belief of Christianity by unholy agents. This is so perfectly opposed to the depravity of the human heart—the carnal mind in man,—to what sinners suppose to be their interest,—to the history of the wicked, and the motives by which they act,—in a word, is so preposterous, that it scarcely deserves a passing remark. Your own observation and experience, my hearers, are an unanswerable refutation of this almost stupid assumption.

Where do you see sinners laboring to turn the ungodly to Christ? Where do you see them striving to thin their own ranks, by swelling the number of Christians? Where do you see them planning or toiling to diminish the fountain of moral corruption and vice, by increasing the streams of Christian piety and holiness? Nowhere in all your observation. Or when did you ever witness this? Never; no, never. But should we inquire when, and where, you have seen the wicked laboring, not only to retain their associates in sin, but to seduce the pious into *their* paths, your recollections might furnish, in answer, many painful examples. But what says experience on this subject? No doubt, many that hear me find a record in their own breast, that while they were sinners, so far from attempting to convert others to Christ, they resisted the convictions of the Holy Spirit on their own hearts, and encouraged others in the same rebellion. And the facts in your own case are but an exemplification of unrenewed human nature; what is, has been—is now—and ever will be, till changed by the power of divine grace. But why spend time on this point? The man who maintains the position we here oppose, has not only renounced the Bible, but he must contradict his own experience, his own observation—the experience and observations of mankind generally. He must not only believe in the absence of evidence, but against all rational evidence, and congregate in himself the follies and absurdities he would charge upon others. Such a character has passed beyond the reach of reason; but we will still follow him by our love for his soul, and our prayers for his salvation. But a remark further on this point. Commentators have made concessions, of which infidelity has not been slow to avail itself, in order to account for the conversion of Saul on other principles than that of the power of divine grace. It has been conceded, or supposed, that the light that shone around Saul above the brightness of the sun at noonday, and the sound that accompanied it, under which he "trembled," was only that of lightning and thunder, and that it was the natural effect of the *electric fluid* that produced his blindness. Infidelity, well pleased with this concession, maintains that Saul's vivid and affrighted imagination created all the other supposed facts, converted this common operation of nature into a supernatural visitation, and was *self*-deceived.

On this useless, not to say vain, speculation, we make a few passing remarks.

And first, to Christians. If this circumstance was only a sublime operation of nature, as supposed above, Saul either knew it to be such, or he did not. To say that he did not know the common operations of nature in a thunder-storm, is not only to convert him into a fanatic, but a fool! And if he did know it, then is it not impossible to defend his character for truth and honesty? For in every instance in which he speaks of his conversion, he treats the whole case as a supernatural display of divine power and grace, without the least intimation to the contrary. For example, when he refers to his conversion in Acts xxii, he says, "And when I could not see for the glory of that light," if he did not design to deceive, he should, in truth and moral honesty, have said, "And when I could not see for the effects of the electric fluid!" or, in common language, having been stunned or struck with lightning! But Paul was incapable of such evasion; and all such speculations, by Christians, are much more likely to hinder than help the cause of truth and holiness. And secondly, we turn now for a few minutes to the unbeliever, and allow him all the advantages he can derive from the concessions of commentators and divines. And still more. He may invest this natural scene, as he claims it to be, with all the powers he may choose; and bring it to operate on Saul, and produce all the change that was wrought in him, and thus reach his conclusion to his entire satisfaction, that all the change of which he was the subject was effected by the grand display of nature in the case above supposed.

And when we allow all this, what follows? Why, just the contrary of what the skeptic wished and intended. First, the absurdity that a *physical cause* can produce a *moral effect.* For that Paul was the subject of a *moral change* is too plain either to require proof, or to be rendered clearer by it. And the question is not, whether God can use natural agents, as lightning, or anything else, as means to arrest the attention of sinners, but whether they can effect that thorough *moral change,* such as was demonstrated in the case of Paul. The thought is preposterous in the extreme, and alike contradictory of the laws of nature, the moral constitution of man, and the administration of God!

But, for the sake of argument, let us allow that Paul was thus *morally changed*—that the entire transformation of his moral character, as evinced in his subsequent life of continual devotion to the interest of religion, was all attributable to this natural cause; and what follows? Why, secondly, we are conducted to a stupendous *miracle!* But why all this tenacity of infidelity to account for the conversion of Saul on natural principles? For this specific reason: to avoid the miraculous, supernatural power of divine grace in the conversion of sinners. But by its own course of reasoning, instead of getting rid of miraculous or supernatural power, it has plunged itself into the most miraculous scene the world ever witnessed! For we may safely challenge the history of the operations of nature, the history of man, and the history of the divine administration, to produce another case where *physical agents* produced such a universal *moral change* as is found in the case of Paul. A miracle too, where the agent, or cause, is infinitely inadequate to produce the effect. O! the blindness of infidelity, and the folly of fallen man, in attempting to evade the force of the truth of God! Let us beware, my friends, lest we be taken in their snares, and ruin our souls. But if Saul was not deceived, he was the deceiver. This is frequently insinuated or asserted by those who claim distinction for their intelligence and candor. And not so much with a hope of convincing them, as of preventing others from falling into their pernicious errors, we devote a few minutes' attention to this point. On the assumption that Paul was the impostor, he acted either *with* or *without* object or motive. None can doubt this; and especially those who charge him with insincerity. Such have already forestalled themselves by attributing to him various motives for deception. And indeed, to suppose that he acted *without* motive in changing his religion, is to convert him into a *madman* instead of a hypocrite! It follows, therefore, beyond all doubt, that he had an object, a well-defined object or motive in view in becoming a Christian.

This motive must have had special reference alone to the *future world;* or it must have been confined alone to *this world.* But nothing can be more unreasonable than to suppose that Paul could draw motives from the eternal world to become a hypocrite. He was before and after his conversion a believer in the resurrection, a future judgment and retribution, the endless rewards of the righteous in heaven, and the endless perdition of the hypocrite and unbeliever in hell. Who, then, in his senses, can believe that Saul could, from such considerations, be induced to become a hypocrite; persist in, and suffer for it, through life, and for it provoke a violent death, with no other hope than to lose heaven, and suffer the anguish of the second death for ever? No one who respects himself, or wishes to be respected by others, can seriously believe this. And then, there is but one point left on which to remark, to see if he was the deceiver. If he was, it must have been from considerations confined alone to this world. But, my friends, let us see if this will account for the supposed hypocrisy of Paul. What are the most prominent worldly motives which prompt depraved and ambitious men to action? We apprehend that if wealth, power, honor, ease, and pleasure, were blotted out of being, and nothing of a similar character take their place, our race would rarely ever be troubled with ambitious, corrupt aspirants for distinction. But could Paul be influenced by such considerations? Look at but a few facts. With regard to power, few of his age possessed more among his own nation as a Jew and a Pharisee, with every reasonable human prospect of its increase, even to the extent of inflamed ambition; while Christ proclaimed, and doubtless Paul knew the fact, "He that will be great, or the chief among my disciples, must be servant of all."

In relation to wealth and honor, the usual attendants on power, the prospects of Saul, as a Jew, were not less flattering; while he knew, that to become a follower of Christ, he must go forth into the world without the second coat—without purse or scrip—only to be hated of those who were strangers to Christ and the power of his saving grace. If ease and pleasure in this world were his object; with his talents, his attainments, the public confidence reposed in him, the public trusts confided to him, the honors and distinctions conferred on him, as a Jew: these were spread out before him with all their enchantments. While if he is Christ's disciple, all these must be sacrificed; he must deny himself, take up the cross, and follow his Master through poverty, persecutions, perils, sufferings, and death.

Who, then, my brethren, can for a moment believe, without abjuring all reason, that Saul was induced, from worldly motives, to assume the character of a Christian, being a mere hypocrite at heart? It follows, then, most conclusively, that if Saul was the subject of a universal change in matters of religion, as we have seen that he was, and that in this change he was not deceived himself; and that he could not have designed to deceive others; then it was emphatically the work of God. Viewed in this light, the subject is freed from all embarrassment, and rises before us in all its moral grandeur, as a glorious triumph of the saving power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here is the "chief of sinners," grossly ignorant of the true character and worship of God; blaspheming the name of Christ; with hands stained in innocent blood; "breathing out slaughter and death" against the infant church; and with authority to execute his cruel designs upon the saints of God; arrested—a trembling penitent at the feet of Jesus, consecrates himself to his service—believes in his vicarious death—is pardoned—regenerated, filled with love to God and man; unites himself with the poor persecuted disciples of Christ; takes upon him all the obligations of Christianity; devotes himself to the ministry; lives a life of unexampled labor, and dies a martyr; evincing at every step, from his conversion to his death, a universal moral change of heart and life. But to whom shall we attribute this glorious work? Not to man. All his powers and skill are perfect weakness. Not to angels. They are infinitely inadequate to the task. But to the virtue of the blood of the Son of God, applied to the penitent believer's heart by the matchless power of the Holy Spirit, and received and enjoyed by the power of living and confiding faith only. O, my friends, let us examine. Have we the evidence in our hearts, that we are the subjects of this saving change; have received an application of that cleansing blood, and are the children of God, by faith in Jesus Christ? But we pass to the last member of this subject.

III. *That the conduct of Saul, under the divine administration, strikingly exemplifies that obedience that all men owe to the Lord Jesus Christ, their only Saviour.*

And, first, as an awakened sinner. He was brought, by divine influence, to see that he was in open rebellion against the Lord, that he was exposed to perdition, and made to feel the anguish of a guilty conscience, and the burden of sin on his polluted heart. And although his conviction of sin was the resistless work of God on his heart, it did not necessarily *compel* obedience. But life and death were set before him, and he was called to decide for eternity. The grace that called, would enable him to choose life; and he could refuse, only at the peril of his soul. He might, with sinners at the present day, have plead exemption, or delay; and with much more show of reason than some who, possibly, hear me at this hour. He might have excused himself from immediate obedience on the ground of peculiar circumstances. He might have urged, that his being a stranger, far from home and friends, was unfavorable to his embracing the religion of Christ, then and there: that he was a public character, an officer; the public eye was upon him; if he received Christ as his Saviour it would be looked upon as an act of unpardonable treachery, and bring great reproach upon the cause of Christ. He might have plead for time to return home—resign his trust to those who had conferred it—arrange his business, so as to give as little offense as possible to unbelievers, and bring no odium on the cause of Christ. And then he would become religious, embrace the Saviour, and devote himself wholly to his service. O my friends, how much of this vain reasoning, this worldly wisdom, do we find among the unconverted at this day! How many are there who, though not under the same circumstances of Saul of Tarsus, have, nevertheless, been made to feel that they are sinners against God; and so clear has been their conviction, that they could as soon doubt their own existence, as that they are guilty offenders against the laws of God! He has a record in their own breast, as undeniable as the fact of their own being; and yet they continue in sin! They plead peculiarity of circumstance—their connections in society—their office, or some worldly consideration, for still deferring their return to Christ—for shunning the light, stopping their ears against divine truth, grieving the Holy Spirit, rejecting the offers of salvation, and ruining their souls. O my unconverted friends, pause and consider—think of your danger, and fly to Christ for mercy. And for your example and encouragement look again at Saul. Convicted of sin: does he delay his return to the Saviour? Not a moment! But, "trembling and astonished," he surrenders all to Christ. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" This remarkable confession of Saul contains several particulars that cannot be too seriously considered, or too closely imitated by the awakened sinner. (1.) His heart is affected, "he trembles." O sinner, lay your heart open to the searching light of truth, and the Spirit of God; and it will feel the full power of awakening grace, and you will tremble. Better tremble within the reach of saving mercy, than in the midst of endless wailings and anguish. (2.) He, with all his talents and attainments, confessed his ignorance, and his willingness to be taught. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" "I am a poor sinner, ignorant of Christ. All the lights of this world cannot show me the way to the cross, without which I am undone for ever. O Lord, teach me!" And you, dying fellow-man, must feel and make the same confession. Whatever importance you may have attached to yourself—however brilliant the gifts of nature or distinguished your acquirements—whatever may be the splendor of your character and reputation, they cannot lead you to the Lamb of God. They will all be but false lights, and lead you down to perdition, if divine light and teaching are rejected. With a heart-affecting sense of your ignorance of God and heaven, and the work of salvation on the soul, you must sacrifice all for Christ, and fly to the virtue of his atoning blood, as your only refuge from the threatening penalty of God's angry and violated law. (3.) He obeyed the divine call by a practical faith. His humble supplication, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" was answered: "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." This first specific duty was most humiliating to the carnal heart. It was not only a defeat of his most sanguine plans and purposes, but perfectly mortifying to his ambition and pride. To be led, a poor, blind supplicant at the feet of Jesus, into that very city where he had expected to enter by authority, and spread terror and dismay among the disciples of that Lord whose mercy he now implored. But he had to submit by faith to this requirement. The Lord did not promise him mercy or pardon if he obeyed; and he did not know but that he was commanded into the city to be made a public example of the justice of the Lord Jesus Christ, for his cruelty to his followers. The future, for the time being, was concealed, and he must obey the Lord by faith, or not at all. O what a trial to a guilty sinner! But his whole soul must be subdued to the divine will; nothing short of this sacrifice of earthly hopes, pride, self-will, and every other passion of a depraved heart, could effect the object. But this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Saul followed the rising light, obeyed the requirement, by humble trust in the great mercy of Jesus Christ, went into the city, fasted, prayed, struggled, believed, and found salvation, was filled with the love of Christ, and rejoiced in the witness of the Holy Spirit that he was born from above, and was a child of God.

And now, my dying hearers, your hearts must be subdued, and you must receive Christ by faith, or be undone for ever. If he command you to go into the city, which, in your case, may be to sever long-cherished associations with sinners—abandon unholy trade or business—reform excessive habits—mortify the pride of a selfish and corrupt heart—bow at the mourners' bench, and ask the prayers of the church of Christ; delay not a moment, make the sacrifice, and by faith, confiding faith, faith that will cast the entire, the eternal interests of the soul, on the virtue of the blood of the Son of God, fly to the Saviour, and, like Saul, fast and pray—wait at the cross till Christ removes the guilt, and renews thy soul in his own glorious image, and you rejoice in a present and full salvation.

But, secondly, if we contemplate Paul as a Christian, his example is equally worthy of imitation by all. Now, a sinner saved by grace, brought to the knowledge of salvation by the remission of past sins, he hastens to take upon himself, without delay or reserve, all the responsibilities of Christianity. He confesses Christ in the sacraments, in the belief and practice of his word, among the most obscure and despised of his followers, before his most powerful and malignant enemies. He hesitates not to commit himself as a Christian, and in favor of Christ and his cause, everywhere, and in all circumstances in life. The glory of the Lord is his steady aim, and his service his constant business and delight, till death closes the scenes and toils of earth. But, my Christian friends, how many follow Paul as he followed Christ in these particulars? How many make shipwreck of a gracious work of God, wrought on their hearts in the days of their penitency, by shunning the cross, neglecting to deny themselves, and to acknowledge Christ and his cause always before men? Too many, it is to be feared, after they are converted, begin the work of ruin on their religious enjoyments, by seeking popular church relations. Their inquiry is not, where are the humble, plain, self-denying, cross-bearing, praying, faithful, holy people of God, whose fellowship will help them on the way to heaven? but, where shall I find the wealthy, fashionable, popular church? And when they have found such a one, it frequently proves to them the house of death! Instead of, like Paul, being crucified to the world, walking by faith, pressing to the mark of the prize of their high calling, perfecting holiness in the fear of God, rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, and in everything giving thanks, being filled with the perfect love of God; they have but the form of godliness, while they deny its power. Others are unwilling wholly to commit themselves in favor of religion, for fear of the cross. Some are not yet ready to sacrifice all the, so called, innocent amusements and fashions of the world; while another class excuse themselves from emulating this example, from want of gifts and qualifications. From these and other causes of unfaithfulness to Christ, the moral power of the church has been greatly paralized, and her usefulness, in proportion, lost to our fallen race.

All these classes of pretenders to religion should awake speedily to vigorous and holy action: for the clouds of a dismal night are stealing around them; the storm of death is heard in the distance; the retributions of eternity are fast approaching; the horrors of an endless night await them; and nothing but a speedy reformation, and a holy emulation of Paul as a Christian, will avert the fearful consequences of denying Christ, and secure to them, with Paul, the glories of heaven.

Thirdly, before we close, we will spend a few minutes in viewing Paul from another point, namely, as a minister of Jesus Christ. Under other circumstances we might here enlarge; but, at the present, the notice of a few particulars only will suffice. And first, his call to the arduous work was of God: "I received it not of man, nor by the will of man, but of God." Then let no man, whatever his real or supposed qualifications may be, dare to enter into this holy work, without his convictions are as clear that he is called of God, as they are that he is a sinner saved by grace, and has the witness of God in his heart that he is accepted of him through Jesus Christ. Secondly, when called, he immediately obeyed: "He conferred not with flesh and blood, but straightway preached Jesus." And though it is probable he did not enter fully upon the regular work of the ministry for some time after his conversion, he was, nevertheless, perfectly submissive to his call, and in the order of divine Providence. But is there no reason to fear, that there are some who either run before they are called, or refuse to go when called? Let all concerned beware: there are eternal interests involved in this awful subject. And who can determine, till the light of eternity reveals the facts, who is the greatest delinquent—he who goes before he is called, or he who refuses when called to this work? In the third place, his sufficiency as a minister was all of grace through faith in Christ. Christ was his "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." He lived, yet "Christ lived in him." He had this glorious gospel treasure in an "earthen vessel, that the excellency of the power might be of God." And truly, "who is sufficient for these things?" only as they are wise in the wisdom of Christ, strong in his strength, and walk in the light as he is in the light, that they may have fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Fourthly, his theme was the cross. His motto was, "For I determined to know nothing among you but Jesus Christ and him crucified." "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which I am crucified to the world, and the world to me." Christ, the demonstration of the love of God to fallen man—Christ, the vicarious sacrifice for our sins; the only meritorious cause of our redemption and salvation—Christ, the risen Redeemer; the pledge and model of the future glory of the saints; and our glorious Advocate with the Father—Christ, as a willing, present, perfect, and almighty Saviour—Christ Jesus, the Judge of the world. And O! what a glorious theme for the messenger of God! Full of merit for, and mercy toward, man. And who is worthy the name or place of an ambassador of Christ who comes to ruined man with any other theme? What are the flowers of rhetoric—the show of logic—the lustre of literature and science—the sparklings of wit or genius, compared with the cross? Wo to that man who attempts to substitute these, or anything else, for the cross of Jesus Christ: he will be a curse to himself, the church, and the world. Finally, he acknowledged himself debtor to all, and his duty, according to his holy calling, to preach Christ to all classes and conditions of our fallen race. And while he offered present salvation by faith in Jesus Christ to crowded multitudes, he ceased not day and night to warn others with tears from house to house. He was alike faithful in proclaiming the cross of Christ, whether he addressed a trembling jailer, or the affrighted mariner driven by the angry waves on his broken ship; whether he preached to the furious mob in the streets, or royalty with its splendid retinue in the palace; whether he proclaimed salvation in Athens, or in Rome, the mistress of the world, he was the same faithful messenger of God. "Warning every man and teaching every man; that he might present them perfect in Christ Jesus." But this is not all: so far from seeking ease in the evening of life, his labors, sacrifices, and zeal, appear to have increased with his age and the roll of time, till, through the riches of divine grace, he was transmitted from the toils of earth to the endless glories of heaven. And, O my brethren in the ministry, though none may surpass Paul, and few reach his glorious eminence, yet all may emulate his faithfulness, purity, zeal, and usefulness, and share at last in his eternal glory. And if this were the character and aim of the ministry throughout Christendom, God would make them the distinguished and highly honored instruments of arousing a languid church—waking a sleeping world, and bringing unnumbered millions of mankind home to glory and to God, to join the redeemed of every age and clime in the triumphant shout—"Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

We close with a few remarks. And first, we have seen that it is exclusively the work of God to convict the sinner, and convert and save the soul. All other power is absolute weakness, and infinitely inadequate to justify, regenerate, sanctify, and save the soul of sinful man. But, secondly, though this is the work of God, he requires of man faith—unqualified faith and obedience—as the only conditions of salvation; and God can no more, consistently with his own perfections, save the sinner without faith, than the sinner can save himself without the grace of God in Christ Jesus. O then, my unconverted friends, come to Christ. Time is short: life is uncertain. The thunder of the violated law of God hangs over your head. The horrors of an endless hell are moving beneath your feet. Death is pursuing you; the decisions of eternal judgment are just before you. Your soul is polluted by sin; your conscience bleeds under a sense of anguish and guilt.

There is no safety for you—no, not a shadow of hope—but in the atoning blood of Christ. O come to Christ just as you are; bring your burdened heart—your guilty conscience. Come now; come and confess your sins; come praying. O come by faith—faith that confesses all—that forsakes all sin—that casts all your burden on the blessed Saviour: faith that takes Christ at his word; that claims and lays hold on the merit of his blood; that appropriates that blessed merit to your soul, and you shall be saved. You shall be saved now—this moment, if you will believe, salvation will, shall descend upon your heart; and you may rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory—in blissful hope of immortality in heaven. Thirdly, brethren in Christ, who have tasted that the Lord is good, and rejoice in a present salvation, let the example of Paul, as a Christian, stimulate you to constant faithfulness in your holy calling. Live for perfect love, as the only way to retain your Christian faith and enjoyment: live for the image of Christ fully impressed on your heart by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit: live to be useful in the church of Christ, in the salvation of precious souls: live by faith and holiness for an eternal weight of glory in heaven. And soon, very soon, all your trials on earth will terminate, and you will rest with the glorified in the church triumphant. And, finally, let the ministry be scrupulously faithful in their distinguished and holy calling; the church faithful to her glorious Head; and his salvation shall go forth as brightness, till the world shall be subdued to his authority, and his ransomed children brought home to his eternal glory. May the Holy Spirit seal instruction on all our hearts, and bring us at last to the glories of his heavenly kingdom! Amen.

SERMON XVI.

The Great Salvation by Jesus Christ.

BY REV. SAMUEL LUCKEY, D. D.,

OF THE GENESEE CONFERENCE.

"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"—Heb. ii, 1, 2.

THAT "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord," is the doctrine asserted by the apostle Paul in this text.

It may be briefly illustrated thus:—The fundamental law of an empire declares treason a crime punishable with death. This law must be rigorously maintained to sustain the dignity and supremacy of the sovereign, and preserve the empire from universal anarchy. Despite of the law, individuals array themselves in open rebellion against the sovereign and his authority, are arraigned, tried, convicted, and condemned to death. They now feel the power there is in the law to condemn; but see in it no way of escape. They are informed, however, that their gracious sovereign, in the plenitude of his goodness, has provided to grant pardon to the guilty, on certain prescribed conditions; and that he will save them from suffering the full penalty of the law in no other way. They are careless about inquiring into these conditions of pardon, or dislike, and therefore reject them; and persist in their obstinacy of trying to escape by some other means. Anxious friends warn them of their folly and their danger. They constrain them to acknowledge the law, that it is just and good. They remind them of the truth and justice of their sovereign, that he will maintain the integrity of his government. They urge upon them a consideration of his abundant goodness in providing a way of pardon for those who deseve his displeasure, on terms consistent with his dignity and the peace and happiness of his subjects, and every way suited to the condition of the guilty. And they conclude with this forcible appeal:—"If the law by which you stand condemned be 'steadfast,' and, by its terms, 'every transgression and disobedience receives a just recompense of reward;' how can you 'escape' its penalty, if you 'neglect' the only provision your sovereign has made for pardon?"

That the doctrine of the text, as applicable to the condition of fallen man, is what this simple illustration indicates, will appear evident, if we consider,—

I. WHAT IS MEANT BY "THE WORD SPOKEN BY ANGELS?"

II. WHAT BY "SO GREAT SALVATION?"

III. THE CONCLUSION DEDUCED FROM THE RELATION THEY SUSTAIN TO EACH OTHER IN THE TEXT.

I. *What is meant by "the word spoken by angels?"*

1. The law, unquestionably, as contradistinguished from the gospel. Of the fathers, St. Stephen said, "Who have received the law by the disposition of angels;" and St. Paul says, "It was ordained by angels in the hands of a Mediator." Whatever interpretation may be given to these forms of expression, it is evident that St. Paul employs "the word spoken by angels" to signify "the law which serveth because of transgressions," in contrast with the "great salvation:" the former as that which God "at sundry times and in divers manners spake unto the fathers" by instruments of his own choosing; the latter as that "which at the first began to be spoken" authoritatively "by the Lord himself, and was confirmed by them that heard him." "It is evident," as Mr. Benson remarks, "that not the original authoritative giving of the law, but the ministerial ordering of things in its promulgation, is that which is ascribed to angels. The apostle having just insisted (chap. i) on a comparison between Christ and the angels, his argument is greatly corroborated when it is considered, that the law was *the word spoken by angels;* but the gospel was delivered by the Son, who is so far exalted above them."

2. When in this connection we speak of *law* as contradistinguished from *gospel*, we mean that rule of moral conduct, of both heart and life, to which God exacts perfect obedience from all his intelligent creatures.

If God be acknowledged as a moral governor at all, we cannot avoid the conclusion that such a rule of action was instituted by him for the government of man. "The manner in which God governs rational creatures," says Mr. Watson, "is by law, as the rule of their obedience to him, and this is what we call God's moral government of the world." Under such a rule of obedience, comprising all the attributes of law adapted to the government of man, did our first parents exist before transgression. This law harmonizes in all respects with the attributes of its Author; and under its provisions eternal life is suspended upon perfect obedience to its requirements. As law, then, it is perfect in itself, containing none of the attributes of gospel—no provision for the pardon of transgressors, or salvation from that death which is its declared penalty. It is in this respect that we are to understand the apostle as contrasting "the word spoken by angels" with the "great salvation" procured and published by Jesus Christ.

3. The law has not been abrogated by the introduction of the gospel; nor has its claims been alienated, or its sanctions abolished. It continues, as a flaming sword, guarding the way of the tree of life, that none may approach it but by the new and living way opened up in the gospel—salvation through the atonement, by faith in Christ.

It is with great force and solemnity that the apostle introduces the law—"the word spoken by angels"—as the basis of his argument, and places before the mind those attributes which make it terrible. It is "steadfast," settled, fixed, firm, inflexible, unchanging, and unchangeable. It will not halt, nor falter, nor turn aside from its steady purpose, until its claims are answered, and its demands fulfilled. It is a perfect law of a perfect Lawgiver; and the integrity of his government requires that it should be steadfast and invincible in all its exactions. The slightest relaxation would prostrate his authority, and uproot the very foundations of his government.

No truth is more clearly set forth in the Scriptures than this. The whole universe is invoked in the name of Jehovah to hear it. "I will publish," said Moses, "the name of Jehovah; ascribe ye greatness to our God. He is the rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is he." His own perfections of justice and truth, and the perfection of his law, which is "holy, just, and good," stand pledged for the steadfastness of its demands.

But what are its demands? Holiness of heart and life; love to God and man. Its language is explicit and unequivocal: "Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." How comprehensive! How deep and searching! Exacting perfect conformity to the nature and requirements of a holy God;—unvarying love to God and man!

4. To perceive the force of the apostle's argument it is necessary to notice the prominence he gives to the penal character of the law. "Every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward." This is its distinguishing characteristic as law. "For it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." It is "the letter which killeth,"—emphatically "the law of sin and death." Its language is the language of condemnation to the guilty: "For if there had been a law which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." Not the promise of the law. It knows not the language of promise. On the contrary, "We know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."

By its terms, "every transgression and disobedience" subjects the offenders to the death which is its penalty, while it provides no way of escape.

5. The "just recompense of reward" is this penalty. "A recompense," says Mr. Benson, "proportionable to the crime, according to the judgment of God, which is infinitely just and equal, and implies that they who commit sin 'are worthy of death.'" Death is the penalty of the law: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

This is, plainly, a forfeiture of life—of *eternal life*—

which, under the law, nothing but perfect obedience can insure. Spiritual life is communion with God, in righteousness and holiness; and in its nature it is eternal life, which alone will insure us eternal communion with God in heaven. This life is forfeited by sin. All have fallen under the curse;—all by the just judgment of the law "are dead in trespasses and in sins," and so remain until quickened by Christ. The penalty, then, being a forfeiture of eternal life, is eternal death. Eternal life, if ever obtained by those who have forfeited it, will be, not an award of the law, but "the *gift* of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Thus is the penalty of the law *eternal death.* It cannot be otherwise if it be a forfeiture of *eternal life;* for, if it were necessarily limited in its duration, it would not be a forfeiture, but only a suspension, of eternal life. Let sinners, guilty and condemned, ponder this in their hearts; take the law in its broad and comprehensive sense, extending to every action of life, every motive and affection of the heart; study it section by section, clause by clause; mark well its spirituality, its purity, its integrity; listen to its terrible denunciations against incorrigible transgressors; and then answer the solemn appeal: How can you escape? Whither will you fly for refuge? Who, who shall deliver you from this death?

II. *What is meant by the expression, "So great salvation,"* in the text?

1. "The salvation mentioned here," says Dr. Adam Clarke, "is the whole system of Christianity, with all the privileges it confers." That it is the *system* of salvation is evident, because it was "spoken," or revealed, "by the Lord," and "confirmed by them that heard him." It is a system of conditions, too, proposing deliverance from sin and death through faith in Christ, and that holiness of heart and life which is the fruit of faith; and these are not to be "*neglected.*" All this is clearly implied in the language of the apostle.

2. The theme of the gospel is *salvation* by Jesus Christ. It is *founded* in him. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." He is "the Author and Finisher of our faith;"—"the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him." Of the whole system of the gospel, he is "the Alpha and the

Omega"—"all and in all." To procure salvation he came from heaven, suffered, and died. "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus the Lord came into the world to save sinners." "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

The gospel is a *remedial system.* It proposes satisfaction to the claims of justice by a propitiatory offering for sin. All the remedial benefits of the gospel are ascribed in it to the *atonement*, as a "satisfaction offered to divine justice by the death of Christ for the sins of mankind, by virtue of which all true penitents who believe in Christ are personally reconciled to God, are freed from the penalty of their sins, and entitled to eternal life."* This is the fundamental principle of the gospel of salvation. "He was wounded for our transgressions." "He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;" "was delivered for our offenses;" "died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." "For while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

By this offering we were *redeemed*, bought back from the bondage of sin and the penal sentence of the law. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price." "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!"

3. *Eternal life*, with all the means and provisions necessary to its attainment, is ascribed to the atonement. That "repentance which is unto salvation," and the "remission of sins," are gospel privileges procured and appropriated by the sufferings and intercession of Christ. "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations." "Him hath God exalted,—to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."

So also is "Jesus Christ and him crucified" the object of all true saving *faith.* "The righteousness of God without the law is manifested, which is by faith in Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe;—being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past." Thus is the remission of sins declared to be according to the righteousness of God through faith in the blood of atonement; "that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

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* Watson on the atonement.

Our spiritual *adoption* as the children of God is one of the rich blessings procured for us by the atonement, and is therefore a gospel, not a law, privilege. "As many as receive him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."

Moreover, we are *sanctified* by the "blood of the covenant," and thus made holy and meet for communion with God in heaven. "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." "These are they" who have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." And the redeemed in heaven sing, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,—to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever."

Most clearly is this truth revealed throughout the Scriptures, that salvation from sin and death, and eternal life in heaven, are gospel blessings, received solely through our Lord Jesus Christ, by virtue of the atonement. This is the sinner's only hope, the only way of escape for a guilty world.

4. To be thus saved, we must come to God through Christ. In thus doing, we have promise that he will save: "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him." "Come unto me," said he, "and I will give you rest." "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." We must seek him by prayer: "Seek

ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near." "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." We must receive him by faith: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." All who slight these requirements, neglect this great salvation. This is a strong point in the apostle's argument.

It will be perceived that salvation through Christ does not make void the law, or abolish its sanctions; but it proposes, through the gracious provisions which God has made for guilty man, to prepare him for everlasting life through pardon and sanctification of the Spirit. The law requires habitual love to God and man. This consists with holiness, and leads to everlasting life in the world to come. But by sin all are destitute of this moral purity, and "are dead in" their "trespasses." A change is therefore necessary, a moral renovation of soul, in order to prepare us to serve God acceptably, and inherit eternal life. Such a change the gospel contemplates, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. This gospel "is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." This change is the new birth, constituting its subjects new creatures, and preparing them to "love God" supremely, and "delight" in his law, "after the inward man." God "writes his law in their hearts." They "dwell in love," and thus, evangelically, fulfill the law: "For he that loveth hath fulfilled the law." Thus does God, through the salvation of the gospel, "magnify his law, and make it honorable."

5. All this, let it be remembered, upon which eternal life is offered to sinful man, is through the atonement by Jesus Christ; and is the only remedy God has provided against the penalty of the law. Eternal life is everywhere in the Scriptures represented as a *purchased possession*, procured and bestowed "through Jesus Christ our Lord." He says of himself, "I am the way, the truth, and the life;" "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Of those who hear his voice, and follow him, he says, "I *give* unto them eternal life." "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him,—it shall be in him a well of water, sprinking up into

everlasting life." And to the unbelieving Jews he said, "Ye will not come unto me, that you might have life." "This is the record, that God hath given us eternal life; and this life is in his Son." "When Christ, who is your life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

All this is peculiar to an economy of *salvation*, and in nowise consistent with the law of works. It is the subject-matter of that "great salvation, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord." As its author, he "brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." A ray of this life-inspiring light shone in the promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent. It was rendered brilliant and vivifying, when he proclaimed, "Lo! I come, as it is written of me—to do thy will, O God!" He connected with his own proper character as God, that of a *Saviour*, in announcing himself to man: "I am a just God, and Saviour. Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Wondrous language this! "Begun at the first to be spoken by the Lord." Who else could have spoken it, but by permission? Angels adopted it, and veiled their faces, as they sung, "Unto you is born a SAVIOUR, who is Christ the Lord." It was his work to *save*. His word was the word of *life;* his gospel, a gospel of *salvation*. Here is the covenant of promise—the covenant of grace, sealed with blood. Through it pardon is offered to the guilty, purity to the polluted, and life to the dead. This is the only salvation from that death which is the penalty of the law. "He that believeth in me," said the Saviour, "though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

6. But the text asserts the possibility and danger of failing to receive this gracious gift of God, "everlasting life through Jesus Christ our Lord," by neglecting the gospel: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" This is equivalent to the most solemn assertion that we *cannot*. Hence the importance of the duty to "give the more earnest heed" to these things, "lest at any time we should let them slip." Eternal life is suspended upon terms and conditions set forth in the gospel; and, to insure it, intense application to these is necessary,

lest anything essential to that end should be permitted to slip, and the soul be left under the power of eternal death. How tremendous the motive "to give the more earnest heed!"

They neglect this great salvation who are indifferent to its terms and provisions, and slight the offer of pardon it makes to the guilty. Their indifference shows that they are not influenced by that sense of the guilt of sin, without which they cannot be fit subjects for pardon, in any way consistent with the purity and integrity of the moral government of God. "To this man will I look," saith the Lord, "even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word." "God is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

The gospel requires that sinners not only feel, but confess, their guilt. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and make Him a liar; but if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." And we are saved through faith alone: "By grace are ye saved, through faith." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "Now the just shall live by faith." "Without faith it is impossible to please God." "He that believeth not shall be damned." All unbelievers neglect it.

To be saved, we must be "led by the Spirit," and "walk in the Spirit." "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." All the Christian graces must be kept alive by watchfulness, and prayer, and self-denying lives; for "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." How intense, then, should be our earnestness, to let none of these things slip! If inattention in any of these respects ranks us among neglecters of this great salvation, what must be the state and condition of such as "deny the Lord that bought them," and openly trample upon his authority and laws without restraint? Equally true and alarming is that picture of our depraved world which is drawn by the hand of the great Master himself: "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, which leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth to life, and few there be that find it."

III. *The conclusion deduced from the relation in which the gospel of the grace of God stands to the law, which is steadfast in its claims of justice, strikes us with all the force of moral demonstration.*

1. From what has been said, it is evidently this, that everlasting life, as the gift of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, is the only remedy against eternal death, which is the penalty of the law. Sin, in any of its forms, and under all circumstances, is offensive against God, and subversive of the principles of eternal justice. While eternal justice, then, remains as an attribute of the moral Govérnor of the universe, and eternal truth lives in his nature, death will be the penalty of unpardoned sin. Such is the sanction of his law: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die;" and it is steadfast.

As "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," the condition of all would be hopeless, but for the remedy provided "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," and "brought to light in the gospel." What a provision is this! What a value has God placed upon it, since he gave his only begotten Son to procure it! What madness and folly in man to neglect it, since all that is desirable in everlasting life, and all that is dreadful in eternal death, are suspended upon it! Of this there can be no doubt. "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved." "As many as are under the works of the law, are under the curse;" "shut up unto the faith which is in Christ Jesus." This is the only open door—the only way of escape. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

2. "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." In the terms of both the law and the gospel, God deals with man as a moral agent. The law requires perfect obedience. Justice demands that God should "by no means clear the guilty," who persist in violating its requirements. The gospel offers pardon to the penitent who believe in Christ. Here God appears as he proclaimed himself to Moses; "merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness."

Thus are his attributes harmonized in vindicating the principles of eternal justice against those who exercise their moral agency in perversely rejecting the provisions of the gospel, and granting pardon and eternal life to those who obey it. "If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever."

3. The doctrine of the text shows most conclusively that the punishment of the finally impenitent will be *eternal.* Is *death* the penalty of the law? We have seen that *life* is the only remedy against it. This life "is the gift of God through our Lord Jesus Christ;" and it is *eternal* life. If this be the only remedy against death, then that death in which it leaves those who do not receive it must be *eternal* death. This is too plain to admit of a rational doubt. Life and death, in Scripture language, are perfect opposites, in nature and extent, when employed in reference to the same subject; so that where one is *not* there the other *is.* Both of these, in the eternal world, no human being can escape. Sin lays all under the penalty of death, from which there is no salvation, but by that life which is through Jesus Christ. Not to receive everlasting life is, then, necessarily to suffer eternal death; and that solemn declaration respecting the righteous and the wicked will be found true to the letter, however mystified by false philology and shallow criticisms: "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

The conditional character of the gospel shows the possibility and danger of suffering the penalty of eternal death in the clearest light. Everywhere eternal life is held out as the motive to faith and obedience. "That whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life," is the language by which the condition and the consequence are connected with every declaration of God's love to man in the gift of his Son: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Admit that everlasting life shall be the portion of the wicked as well as the righteous—that all will be saved—and what are these conditions, uttered with so much solemnity and interest, but deceit and mockery? For what are men exhorted to believe in Christ, to keep themselves in the love of God, and through the Spirit to mortify the deeds of the body? For what admonished rather to sacrifice life itself than deny Christ? But if the wicked do *not* go with the righteous into life eternal, what will be their portion? There is one only answer; *eternal death.* This is the awful doom which neglecters of salvation cannot escape.

4. The doctrine of the text proves that any interpretation of the gospel which teaches that neglecters of it can and will escape the punishment of eternal death, is *antichristian* and *false.*

In the name of Christianity, absurd as it may seem, Universalism repudiates endless punishment for sin. This system, the fundamental principle of which is, "that all men will be finally happy in heaven," is called a system of *salvation;* and, because it contemplates the final happiness of all, that state of happiness is called *universal salvation.* This is predicated of the gospel. Its teachers inculcate it as a doctrine of the gospel; and, in doing so, dwell much upon those passages of Scripture which exhibit the goodness of God as the merciful Father of all, and the love of Christ in giving himself a ransom for all. It is this which invests their teaching with its charm to allure, and its power to deceive. But it must be perceived, that if the doctrine we have set forth be correct, this is a fearful delusion, whose destructive tendency should lead all who love Christ and the souls of men to warn the unsuspecting against it. "Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience."

Universalism rejects the doctrine of endless punishment for sin, "as unmerciful, unjust, and cruel; a penalty which a just God never did, and never can, annex to his law." I use the language of its accredited teachers. To sustain this position they expatiate, with much zeal and pathos, upon those portions of Scripture which declare that "God is love;" that "he is merciful, and gracious;" that "he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked;" "willeth not that any should perish;" and that he "will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." And, confining the minds of their hearers to this theme of the goodness of God as the basis of their religious faith, they reason thus: "As God is infinitely good, he could not will a system which could result in that in which he has no pleasure: as he is infinitely wise, he could not adopt a system of government which might, by any means, admit of such a result: and, as he is omnipotent, he could not fail to prevent everything not in accordance with his will and pleasure, and to bring to pass all the good pleasure of his goodness." Thus they jump to the conclusion that eternal punishment for sin is "unjust, unmerciful, and cruel; a penalty which a just God never did, and never can, annex to his law." This is plausible reasoning, which deceives many; and, would they teach it as *their philosophy* only, there would be less inconsistency in it. But they teach it as *gospel,* and appeal to the Scriptures for its support. And that they may render it the more effectual in deceiving the ignorant, and supplanting the doctrines of the gospel, they represent all Christian ministers who teach that God has affixed the penalty of eternal death to his law, which he will inflict upon incorrigible transgressors, as denying his attributes of goodness, wisdom, and power, and holding him up as a capricious, vindictive, and cruel being.

Such instruction to sinners is of the most fearful tendency; and we entreat them to examine the subject with seriousness and candor, lest neglect prove their ruin. There is here but one question to settle:—Is it *gospel?* Is it the doctrine of the Bible? If it be not, who, then, charges God with injustice and cruelty? It is asserted, that a *just* God never did, and never can, annex the penalty of eternal death to his law; and therefore the doctrine of endless punishment is false. But it is a question of fact, and not of inference; and if the Scriptures prove, as has been shown in this discourse, that he has affixed such a penalty to his law, the assertion that a just God could not do so, is a direct charge of injustice; and, if he carry it into effect, of cruelty. One single reflection will show that this cannot be a *gospel* doctrine, because it uproots the very foundation of the gospel system, and renders all its terms trifling and absurd.

The whole theory proceeds upon the ground, that, because God is love—is infinite in goodness—he has not, never had, and never can have, a law to inflict eternal punishment for sin. This necessity against such a law is founded in his nature—the attribute of goodness—which is essential to his being. Now, if this be so, it always was so. God was essentially good before the atonement was provided, as perfectly and unchangeably so as since; and man was never liable to eternal death, and was never *saved* from it; for we cannot be saved from that to which we are not, and cannot, be liable. Then there is no salvation in it, no mercy, no deliverance. The atonement was unnecessary, and is out of the question. The happiness of all in heaven is made sure and necessary by the nature and being of God; and all the terms of the gospel can have no place in the mighty scheme. Is this gospel salvation? Be not deceived with vain words.

But we should add, that this principle excludes death, as a punishment for sin, altogether. If, because God has no pleasure in the death of a sinner, his goodness will therefore prevent it, then it cannot be suffered in any sense. He did not say, "I have no pleasure" in the *eternal* death, but, simply, "in *the death* of the wicked." The argument, then, does not apply to the duration of the punishment, but to the punishment of death altogether. And what is the difference? He who is eternally love and goodness, is such at all times, and every point of time. And if the existence of goodness will eternally prevent suffering for sin, it must also at all points of time. All suffering, then, arising from moral delinquency, is demonstration that the theory is a delusion. Nor will anything be gained by assuming that such suffering is in no sense a penalty for sin; for that would be to make God a capricious, vindictive, cruel being indeed. It hence appears most conclusively that this fundamental argument, which is made the very basis of Universalism, excludes the gospel and salvation by Christ altogether. There is no place for Christ or salvation in it. Natural religion teaches that God is good, and Deism concedes it. What more does this? Let none be deceived by it. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" We have proved that eternal life is the *gift of God*, through Jesus Christ our Lord: it cannot then be a necessary consequence of the being and attributes of God. We have proved too that it is conditionally bestowed: it cannot then be certain and inevitable. "Let God be true, and every man" who contradicts him "a liar."

5. I shall be told, perhaps, that I misrepresent the preaching of Universalists; that they dwell much upon the love of Christ, and discourse sweetly and charmingly of the glorious privilege of salvation through him. This is admitted; and it is therefore the more important to warn sinners against the delusion. Though they profess to preach Christ and salvation, it is still evident that both are excluded from their theory, so that eternal life depends in no sense upon either. To what purpose is it that they entertain their hearers by reciting from the Scriptures such declarations as these: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son;" "Herein is love, not that we loved him, but that he loved us, and gave himself for us;" "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all;" "He was a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world?" It places them indeed before their hearers as Christian teachers. But connected with their theory, these very interesting truths are rendered useless; and therefore the preaching of them is but a sad specimen of solemn mockery. It is admitted, that if man is exposed to eternal death as a penalty for his sins, no subject can be of more importance to him than salvation through Christ. And the love of Christ in giving his life to make such salvation possible, is sufficient to excite the deepest feelings of his heart. But admit that he never was so exposed—that the goodness of God rendered it impossible that he ever should be, and what has Christ done to save him? In what sense is he a Saviour, or is there any salvation in the plan? What is all the gospel says about the love of Christ in dying for sinners, or ministers rehearsing it, but the exhibition of a fictitious tragedy—a religious cheat? This universal salvation is in fact no salvation at all. And the teaching of it as gospel is a delusion and a snare. Let all who would escape the death it denies, turn away from it, lest it prove their ruin. Salvation cannot be the necessary result of the goodness of God, as an attribute of his nature, and depend in any sense on the atonement of our Lord Jesus

Christ, on any conditions held forth in the gospel. It is a plain contradiction. The goodness of God, and the love of Christ, appear in the most glorious light in the gospel plan, in providing a merciful deliverance for man from that eternal death to which sin has made him liable. And all must see, that if sin would subject the transgressor to endless punishment under the law of works, so as to make the atonement necessary, it may since the atonement has been provided; and those who neglect its benefits are accordingly obnoxious to this awful penalty.

That this system excludes salvation by Christ altogether, its advocates, with all their show of preaching Christ and his gospel, most deliberately maintain. They claim it "as one of their peculiar doctrines, that no man can, by any possibility, escape a just punishment for his sins;"—"neither forgiveness," they say explicitly, "nor atonement, nor repentance, nor anything else, can step in between the sinner and the penalty of the violated law." A horrid gospel this! It acknowledges the law, and its just penalty; sin, and a just punishment. And then it affirms that there is no hope for transgressors! All the law demands, God will inflict to the uttermost! There is no reprieve, no salvation from it! The atonement is of no avail! Repentance is fruitless! Faith has no object! There is no compassion, no complacency, no mercy, to be moved by supplication! Despair broods over the repenting sinner, at the throne of grace! And his Judge sternly dooms him to suffer all he can, consistently with his own perfections, inflict as a punishment for his sins! Is there nothing vindictive or cruel in this? Is this the gospel of mercy, and pardon, and salvation? this glad tidings of great joy to all people? There is not an element of salvation in it, nor a principle in harmony with the gospel. It excludes Christ, and mercy, and salvation, from the moral government of God, and represents him as an unrelenting tyrant, deaf to the entreaties of the contrite, and stern in inflicting upon them the whole penalty of his law! And for this he claims that we shall praise his goodness and mercy! What a sad perversion of terms! What is *damnation* more than to suffer all the penalty of the law? And does not this doom all to suffer it to the uttermost? What is it, then, but *universal damnation?* This is its nature; and, to be true to the import of terms, this should be its name. Let all who would escape eternal death, through the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, shun this delusion, and every other subterfuge like it; and seek that pardon and mercy which are offered to them in the gospel.

In conclusion, are any concerned for their souls, and anxiously inquiring what they must do to be saved? We earnestly entreat them to examine seriously and with prayer the doctrine of our text. It presents every man with a view of his own condition, as a sinner under the curse of the law. The penalty of that law is eternal death. Hopeless indeed would be the condition of all, were it true that "neither forgiveness, nor atonement, nor repentance, nor anything else," could interpose "between the sinner and the penalty of the violated law." But, thanks be to God, it is not true. Here is the great salvation, full of mercy and truth. By its provisions, pardon, and mercy, and eternal life, are offered to all! What a remedy! What an exhibition of the goodness of God and the love of Christ! Yet, under this dispensation of mercy, God deals with us as with moral agents. He bestows mercy and eternal life only on those who seek them according to the terms of the gospel, through faith in Christ. There is no other way. You cannot escape in neglect of this.

Let all who have never given their hearts to God, know assuredly that they will be judged according to this gospel; and, if they neglect it, they can never enjoy everlasting life. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Yes, *abideth* on him,—and will for ever and ever. "I call heaven and earth to record, that I have set before you life and death." Choose life. Choose it now. Fly to the refuge which is in Christ Jesus, lest sudden destruction come upon you, and ye shall not escape.

SERMON XVII.

The Conservative Power of Christianity.

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"Ye are the salt of the earth."—Matt. v, 13.

THE well-known qualities of the substance from which the metaphor in the text is taken furnish a just and striking illustration of the nature and effects of revealed religion. I say revealed religion; for although the preserving quality is here attributed to *persons*, it will be obvious that it is only by a figure of rhetoric that Christians, as persons, are called "the salt of the earth," or "the light of the world."

There were, however, important reasons for this metonymical use of language in reference to the great doctrines unfolded in this part of our Lord's discourse. In the first place it served to point out to the people the chosen agency of the world's renovation. The persons addressed were the body of the disciples, who, being united together by a common faith, constituted the church. The *church*, then, is the visible medium of divine grace and truth—the reflector of the moral image of God in the world. In this reside the conservant principles of human virtue and felicity.

In the second place it was intended to deeply impress upon the heart of the church the almost infinite obligations which rested upon her to labor to spread the saving influences of this religion among men. "Ye are the salt of the earth." See what trusts are reposed in you—what interesting and momentous consequences are depending upon your zeal and fidelity. "If the salt shall lose its savor, wherewith shall it be salted?" If *you*, my chosen ministers and laborers, shall prove recreant to your duty, what will become of the world? Go forth, then, among the dying and wretched sons of Adam, and spread the influence of the gospel of life. Go and cry in the ears of the world, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." These few remarks are sufficient to indicate the nature of the argument, if proof were demanded, that the church is only the receptacle and visible medium of that light and grace by which the world is preserved from the desolating influences of error and corruption, which, if they did not involve the very being of society, would preclude its ultimate elevation and felicity. If, then, we would retain the position to which we have been already brought; or if we would ascend to the bright summit of our hopes, we must know, so as to appreciate, the agencies by which alone we shall be able to do this. For a false reliance, however earnest it might be, in relation to these great interests, would be as fatal to our hopes as total remissness and inaction.

The spirit of the age partakes too much of the philosophical infidelity of the day. The simplicity of our faith in the true idea of divine providence, and the mediation of Jesus Christ, is thereby endangered; if not by overrating the subsidiary agencies of our prosperity, yet by underrating the office and work of the Holy Spirit, and the influence of gospel truth, upon private and public prosperity. The doctrine contained in the text, if it were permitted to work out its legitimate effects, would correct all these errors, and stimulate us to an accelerated progress in all that is "pure, lovely, and acceptable in the sight of God."

The doctrine which I wish to illustrate in the following discourse is this; namely,

That Christianity, practically illustrated in the character of believers, furnishes the great conservative influence of social and civil society.

I have purposely made this proposition general; for it is the general influence of Christianity upon the public heart which I wish to illustrate in this discourse. And, that no misapprehension may arise in regard to what is included in the language of it, I will briefly explain the proposition itself.

Although I speak of Christianity as it is imbodied in the faith and discipline of the church, I also refer to that by which the church is made what she is in her religious character. The proposition is made chiefly with reference to the moral character and efficacy of the doctrines and sacraments of the Bible. It is not claimed, then, that the Bible is the text-book either of general science, literature, or government. Its teachings are strictly religious. The only concession which we claim for it is, that it teaches nothing contrary to the ascertained laws of general physics —nothing which is repugnant to sound literature, nor anything which infringes upon just and useful associations among men.

Whoever, under the influence of a bewildering superstition, should open the sacred book in hope of finding the evidence which should justify the faith of mankind in the Copernican over the Ptolemaic system of astronomy, would be compelled to close it again in total disappointment; although, as late as the seventeenth century, Galileo fell under church censure for teaching the doctrine of the sun's immobility. And while the Scriptures are not a repository of artificial rules, methods, and models of literary taste and verbal elegance, still there is a variety and brilliancy in their imagery—a power of diction—a loftiness of conception—a pathos—a sublimity and elegance of poetic manifestation—which fairly entitle them to be ranked with the most classical poets and historians of antiquity. As it regards the subject of civil compacts, they utter no precept; they give no model after which they require the nations of the earth to fashion their opinions and customs. Men may be democrats, aristocrats, or monarchists, in theory, and each have equal Scriptural authority for their opinions.

Nor is it claimed by the doctrine of this proposition that all the refinement and felicity of our age spring immediately from the Bible.

Such an assumption would be equally derogatory to the wisdom of God and the true dignity of man. A partial insight into the intellectual and moral constitution of man is sufficient to show that the Creator designed that our progress in personal perfection and enjoyment should arise, conditionally at least, from the exercise and right application of our own distinctive capabilities. Passing with rapidity, as we do, through successive and ascending steps of individual progression, it is beneficently provided, in the endowments of our nature, that memory shall carry along with our advancing being the cumulative treasures of experience and observation, from which, by a process of mental analysis, we may extract the felicitating sweetness of the past, and, recombining it with the fruits of an excursive imagination, the lights and visions of a foreseeing faith, that shall possess, in the deep wells of our own affections and hopes, an unfailing source of immortal joy and life.

The great aggregate of social felicity is the collected joys and prosperity which spring from personal improvement and bliss. The fructifying shower that descends upon the thirsty plain pours out the contributions of a thousand rivers, lakes, and seas; so the brilliant wisdom, ingenuity, and refined enjoyment of an age arise from thousands of unnoticed springs which gush from private affections and virtue.

It is true there is an amazing power in the educational appliances of society—in the doctrines and policy of government—in the cultivation of the arts—a power directly subsidiary to the improvement of the heart and mind of man. And it is equally true that society, acting under its own inward impulse, and going forth guided by the focal light of the world's history and experience, may gain the summit of human improvement and joy. We say human nature is capable of this, and that a right education is a vast engine for working out this grand result.

It is not intended, however, by this concession to the moral force of subordinate agencies, to detract at all from the strength of our main proposition: for we regard society in a light similar to that in which we view the prolific earth—a vast field of capability. In the elements and conformation of the earth, exist the matter and conditional laws of the fragrant flower, the aromatic shrub, and the majestic oak of the forest. But it requires the power and presence of the great orb of day to awaken its latent energies, to stir its gases, and elaborate the inherent vegetable life with which its generous bosom swells. It is the office of this celestial agent to collect the evening dew, and shed it over the roseate cheek of the vale—his, too, to gather the teeming summer-cloud, and pour out its moistening rain upon the forest and upon the field—his, to equalize the pervading gases of the atmosphere, from which the opening flower-bud and foliage may absorb the elements of their future perfection and beauty. Thus is it with society. Possessing, in the natural endowments of its individual parts, the capacity for exalted improvement, and in the additional facilities which arise in the progress of its development, other means of growth and elevation, still it requires the incitements and guidance of our holy religion to bring us to an ultimate perfection; indeed, our advancement toward it depends upon this great benignant power.

The point which we are desirous to inculcate is this; namely, that the contingent auxiliary influences which are intended to promote purity and goodness among men are merely instruments, the real efficacy of which is derived from the influence of revealed religion.

The evidence upon which we rely for the support of our doctrine, we shall deduct from the internal spirit of Christianity, and from the manifestations of that spirit as it is exhibited in the record of its triumphs.

I. It is the avowed purpose and legitimate tendency of the Christian revelation to originate those virtues which are confessed to be the only foundations and evidences of true social and public elevation, and which also are the safeguards of our freedom and felicity. We reckon by a deceptive rule when we estimate the public condition, and adjudge it prosperous, merely by its physical improvements. The leveling of mountains, the filling up of valleys, the improvement of roads, the development of propulsive powers, and the simplification of the methods by which they are applied to mechanical purposes; these things, let it be remembered, are the appliances and tools of society, or, they are the means by which we may be aided in the attainment of the great ends of life. Nor does the accumulation of wealth give certain evidence of that growth and perfection in the social body which can be regarded as a sure guaranty of our future liberty and success. It will be worse than useless to its possessor, if he cannot enjoy the peaceable possession and free use of it.

And need it be said, that accumulation is neither the cure, nor yet the corrective, of cupidity? It must not be forgotten that besides such external physical means of advancement—and it is admitted they may contribute to our real good—it is necessary to our elevation, and the perpetuity of our blessings, that truth, justice, and benevolence, pervade the public heart and character.

The main inquiry, then, is, When are the sources, and what are the sanctions, of an adequate public virtue, to secure the great moral ends of social and political existence? Is it replied, that the federal constitution is the *magna charta* of our liberties? It is answered, that *that* is only a symbol of ideal enfranchisement. For, while it recognizes the fundamental principles of moral virtue, it disclaims the prerogative to enforce the personal duties arising out of them. Shall we be pointed to the Gothic piles and Grecian halls, which reflect the sunlight of heaven as if symbolizing the purity of the truth taught within them? Again we answer, These are schools of thought and mental discipline, and not the fountains of moral renovation. Auxiliary they are to the most exalted ends of human existence, but they are inadequate, as they were not formed for the regeneration of human nature. In our admiration of learning, we are in danger of confounding means with ends; of overlooking the great distinction there is between mental culture and moral renovation. What is more obvious, than that there may exist, in the same being, high mental cultivation, and deep debasement of the affections and will? And this is as true of nations as of individuals. The past yields abundant proof of the truth, that intellectual development has no necessary connection with moral purity.

Without drawing any comparisons between the relative standards of the civilization of the past and present, it must be confessed, upon the evidence furnished in their architectural and literary remains, that many of the ancients had advanced to a very commendable degree of knowledge and mental growth.

Egypt, especially, has a fame for the cultivation of the arts. So long ago as when Greece, afterward the Eden of literature, was seen struggling through the shades of barbarism, and ere Rome had come forth to write her name, even, upon the registry of history, Egypt had hung up the lamp of science in the earth, whose cheering beams were scattered over the pathway of chaotic society, wider and more benignant than the beacon flame of Pharos, whose light went streaming over the turbulent bosom of the sea, to guide the weary and care-worn mariner to his home and friends. Even then, Thebes, the most magnificent city of the world, was spanning the valley of the Nile like an immense arch, whose bases were the mountains of Arabia on the east, and Africa on the west. That single product bore ample testimony to the genius and philosophy of the people who reared it; and, but for the war-cry of the Assyrian, and the destructive hand of Cambyses, it might have stood to this day the throne of the gods, the museum of genius, and the great exemplar of the arts. And although the multitudes who thronged her palaces, jostled along her streets, and worshiped in her temples, have passed away for ever, still, the broken columns, avenues of sphinxes, obelisks, pyramidal gateways, and giant porticoes, give no doubtful evidence of the intellectual greatness of the people of whose history these are the memorials. Who is there that can contemplate the mighty Luxor, the obelisks, statuary, and propylon which surrounded and supported it; or the still more magnificent Carnac, in which Osiris received offerings, and not see in these majestic remains evidence of mental development? It is for the proof of this alone that we cite these things. For, alas! her statuary, her pyramids, her temples, and her tombs, story nothing of her benevolence, her chastity, her love of man, or of that inward purity which is the true source of real outward virtue in man. On the other hand, in her hieroglyphical records there is a prominence of abject forms, battle implements, carnage, and war-triumphs, which gives incontestable evidence that oppression, cruelty, and lust of power, were among her characteristic moral traits.

Temples she had, and gods; and they were earnestly worshiped. But such was the falsity of their forms, and the bestiality of their orgies, that the mind of the worshiper was debased, not elevated,—that the heart of the devotee was deadened, not aroused with the higher instincts of its immortal birth. But whence this obliquity of character? Is it chargeable to the infancy of society?—to the feebleness of historical record and model? If it could be truthfully alledged that she was deficient in these things, it mght very well be pleaded as an apology for her want of a purer literature, and of inductive philosophy. But if it be true, that moral virtue depends neither upon mental discipline nor the general facilities of society, it still remains to be shown why she was so sadly defective in morals and goodness. Can there be any reasonable doubt, that if Egypt had enjoyed the light and power of revealed religion,—a power pre-eminently necessary to the renovation of the lapsed nature of man,—despite the disabilities of the age in which she flourished, she might and would have displayed, in a far more eminent degree, the real dignity of our common nature?

In our grateful contemplations of the fruits of a healthful government, and the general tendencies of education, we are in danger of forgetting the true relation which such a state of things bears to the influences of Christianity. We attribute our success to our superior wisdom, ingenuity, and industry. Like Pharaoh we say, "My river is my own, and I have made it for myself." That we, as a nation, have a more enlightened government, a wiser policy, and a system of means adapted to a higher standard of improvement, is thankfully acknowledged. But whence is it, that in these respects we are in advance of many portions of our race? Will it be said that we had a better ancestry—that they were devout and holy? Devout they were. Our Saxon fathers had gods many. They had gods of war and of peace; of concord and of rage; of sunshine and of rain; of silence and of thunder. They had gods in the grove, on the sea, in the air, and upon the earth. They were worshipers of Woden. Such were our ancestors.

If, then, our moral elevation and social felicity are not to be regarded as the *necessary fruits* of a larger intellect,—of our franchises,—nor the higher grade of our educational means; upon what principle can we interpret the characteristic happiness and prosperity of this, and every other Christian nation, if not by the fact that here the religion of Jesus Christ has exerted its legitimate power upon the religious sentiments and manners of our national being? Not that its fruits are exhibited by every constituent part of the body politic, but that its leavening influence has, in a degree, modified the whole.

It is the grand design of Christianity to make men pure and happy in their individual character, and by this process to renovate the world. Its power is primarily exerted upon the moral nature of man. It aims to release him from that inborn depravity from which arises lust, concupiscence, and evil manners. By sanctifying the heart, it makes the fountain pure, and hence issue streams that are pure. It lays the ax at the root of that evil tree, upon which grow, to a sickening maturity, falsehood, injustice, oppression, cruelty, and every evil work. It provides for the exercise of eminent virtue, by creating sound principles and pure affections. By enforcing upon the understanding and conscience the great laws of truth and holiness, it engages the exercise of benevolence, justice, and humanity. These duties are authoritatively enforced. It lays the foundation of them in the infinite and eternal rectitude of almighty God, the Creator of all things. It earnestly, yet affectionately, cries in the ears of the world, "Be ye holy, for I, the Lord thy God, am holy." Clothing itself with divine authority, benevolence, and moral beauty, Christianity comes forth from the abyssial depths of uncreated and unfathomable holiness and life to give "grace and glory" to man. The fact that it teaches these duties,—duties which all must admit are essential to a complete character, either personal or political,—and that no other power exercising jurisdiction over the moral nature of man can, in the nature of the case, enforce benevolence, chastity, humanity, or inward purity, have we not a right to say, that in the degree that these felicitous traits do exist, they are the fruits of the Christian religion?

II. This conclusion is further sustained by a view of the general aspects of society where Christianity has not been known, or where its authority has been renounced.

We shall not detail the list of corruptions and cruelties which might be drawn up from the best historical authorities, in proof of this point; but merely glance at some characteristic features of that portion of our race to which allusion has now been made.

If the doctrine of *progression* were true, in that sense in which it is held by some theorists, society, as a whole, ought now to be in advance of any given previous age, in proportion to the distance of time which has elapsed since the period with which the comparison is made. It is a favorite notion with certain portions of the transcendental school, that society is like a tree, which, from a mere germ, passes on through a continuous development to a positive ultimate perfection. Thus each evolution of our race develops some evidence of progress, and evolves some new element of future perfectibility.

The completion of one of these indefinite cycles, casts off the *epidermis*, or ross of society, which exists in imperfect religions, governments, and social laws, from which time it goes on in accelerated growth and improvement.

According to this very transcendental phantasy, the whole world ought now to be very wise and very good. The land of the Ptolomies, by this date in the world's history, should have been almost above the gaze of the rest of the race. More than *thirty centuries* have rolled away since her lake Mœris—her labyrinths—her catacombs—her mummy pits, and her pyramids, were the public testimonials of her intellect and her art. She had language, religion, science, cities, and commerce. Indeed, she has been thought by some to have been the parent of learning and philosophy. But *where* is she now? And *what* is she now? Her kings have passed away; her princes and counselors are no more. Her temples have crumbled into dust, and her cities are heaps of ruins. Her monumental pillars and mammoth statuary, as if God would blot out her memory from the earth, are now being entombed by the sand from the deserts. *Ichabod is written upon her.*

But to return from this partial digression. We are now to refer our readers to the contrasting characteristics of pagan and Christian society. And we ask, where, but among those portions of the human family upon whom the light of revelation has shone, are the rights and character of woman acknowledged—general adequate provision made for the education of children; where are there hospitals for the sick—asylums for the infirm—and houses of mercy for the poor?

Go, search through the whole pagan world, and point out a single monument of its mercy; its love of man. No, respected hearer; it requires the spirit of our holy Christianity to move upon the chaos of human nature, to evolve such a spirit as shone in Howard; to elicit such thoughts as were uttered by Clarkson and Wilberforce; or to bring out such an agency of usefulness as that which will carry the name of Robert Raikes down to the latest posterity.

And where, but in Christian countries, will you find wise and equal laws, or letters and science, exerting their legitimate power in the formation of society? Or where is there paganism, and not brutality, bestiality, and every form of degradation? Now, it cannot be alledged that this state of things arises from disabilities growing out of geographical situation, or the climate under which they live: not that they are mentally and constitutionally incapable of a better state. Still they are degraded in intellect, enslaved by passion, fettered with superstition, and miserable in all the relations of life.

These are the facts, and the problem to which they give birth ought to be solved. The question to be answered is this: Why is it, that in a land of Bibles and sabbaths, men are educated, refined, and exalted; while in those countries where the Christian revelation is not known, they are ignorant, debased, and wretched?

If the fact of the knowledge or ignorance of that revelation does not furnish the answer, then the phenomena remain unexplained.

But, upon the principle now assumed, the whole question is clear of difficulty and doubt.

The defections of the pagan world arise mainly from the disordered state of their religious nature. Their passions have no sufficient restraint; their instincts have no wise and authoritative law: hence their intellectual degradation, indeed the debasement of their whole character. Man is emphatically a religious being. Those powerful instincts of his nature will manifest themselves. Restrained they cannot be. If they are not enlightened by reason and truth, they will range the fields of imagination and corrupted sense.

The result will be, that their social condition will be determined by the character of the religion which they embrace. Here is the true solution of the whole question now under consideration.

Christianity is the great fountain of truth, goodness, and perfection in man. It is a fruitful scion of the tree of life, which Mercy has plucked, and cast into the "Marah" of our terrestial state. And now, that the springs of human affection are sweetened, as they run out through the channels of social and political life, they spread joy, health, and peace, in their course.

The general state of society to which we have alluded, strikingly illustrates the position that Christianity is the only sufficient power to secure the existence and exercise of that moral goodness in man, which lays the foundation of true social and public bliss: and it also shows, that if we would preserve our liberties and happiness, our chief reliance must be placed upon this same great gift of Heaven. By this power, if at all, are our government and free institutions to be preserved. The ministry and sacraments of our holy Christianity must send forth upon the public heart their influence, not only to restrain the evils which arise out of the associations of life, but also to purify with their own hallowing grace the original sources of thought and action in man.

What has now been said is very far from completing the argument; but our limited space will not allow the further prosecution of it. A partial recapitulation of what has been said must conclude this discussion.

We have conceded to the general appliances of society all, we think, that can be reasonably affirmed of their power in the formation of character; but we have endeavored to show that the real efficacy of these instrumentalities arises from the coexistent and coactive agency of the Christian religion; that such are the necessities and activity of our religious nature, even in our lapsed condition, that no other than the Christian religion, both from their inadaptation and want of authority, is adequate, either to satisfy the demands of that nature, or develop the virtue of which it is capable. We have also endeavored to make it apparent, that such moral virtue as it is the object of Christianity to promote, is essential to the perfection and well-being of society. In support of these positions we have appealed to the history of the past, and to the most obvious features of the present condition of our race; from all of which we feel authorized to say, in the language of our main position, that Christianity alone furnishes the great conservative power of social and civil society.

III. A few remarks illustrating the duty of the church in regard to this great work must close this discourse.

"*Ye* are the salt of the earth;" that is, the body of believers is the repository of this conservative power. The moral complexion and power of the church are taken from the doctrines upon which it is founded; hence the due observance of the ordinances and sacraments of the gospel, the faith and labors of the church, are the channels through which this salutary influence is exerted upon the heart of the world.

How solemn, and of what moment, are the obligations of the church! And especially if it be remembered, that God has provided no other means for the world's salvation: "For if the salt hath lost its savor, with what shall it be salted?"

1. If the church would accomplish the grand purpose of her organization, she must be holy in her constituent parts, as well as zealously maintain the truth and faith of the gospel in the whole body. We must have salt in ourselves. Nothing can supersede the necessity of personal piety. Nothing can be substituted for this, and we secure the end of our calling.

2. The duty of the church is to salt the *earth*. They are to put forth the savory influences of truth and piety upon the corrupted masses around them. And, alas! how vast the quantity of error and spiritual death in every part of the habitable world! The earth is one immense Golgotha. And who will go forth as messengers of God's mercy and grace to stay this work of corruption and death? Will the politician? Will the magistracy? Will the mass of the people? No, no, my brethren. They are too deeply engaged in schemes of ambition, political intrigue, and party management, to care even for their own souls; much less, therefore, will they care for those who are perishing for lack of vision. Stunned with the noise and clatterings of the machinery of life, they hear not the cry of the helpless, nor the death-wail of the millions who "sit in the region and shadow of death." I repeat the inquiry, *Who* will go to their rescue? *Who*, to break the iron chains of superstition in which nations lie bound? *Who*,

to roll up to its zenith the sun of truth, that its light, falling upon the dark places of the earth, may drink up the pestiferous fogs and death-burdened clouds which, for ages, have rested upon the people? Who is there that, "strengthened with might in the inner man," will go forth and break the galling manacles of despotism and slavery from the enthralled millions of man? Who will immure himself in Africa's sickly deserts and wildernesses, and tell her sons, and tell Kaffer's daughters, the story of Jesus' love? Who will fly with the banner of the cross, and plant it upon the islands of the sea; or bury himself in the mountain passes and craggy fastnesses of the proud Mussulman, and strike down, with "the sword of the Spirit," the emblazoned crest, and echo through their dark glens, along the rugged sides of their hills, and over the desert sands, the name of our Immanuel? Who must do this "work of faith," this "labor of love," and endure this "patience of hope?" Let the living oracle answer: "*Ye are the salt of the earth.*" Grace alone can save the world; and the church is the only constituted medium of that grace. Let the church, then, lay this matter to her heart. Let her ask herself if she has done her duty. Has she prayed, has she wept, has she given as much—sacrificed upon the altar of God and humanity—as she ought?

"Ye are the salt of the earth." What words are these! —what responsibilities do they disclose! Can the church lay her hand upon the text-book of her faith and duty, and say that she has done all that she can to salt the earth? that she has exerted herself correspondingly with her knowledge and means, to save men from the deadly influence of error and corruption?

But why do I talk of the *church*, as if it had ears to hear, and a heart to feel? I must talk to men, not to mere ideal existence.

Reader, every individual Christian is charged with his measure of responsibility for this sacred work. Have you done your duty? O, reflect upon this solemn question! Why are not the heathen enlightened? Why is not the name of Jesus—O, transporting name!—why has it not been sounded out through the earth? Why is not the banner of peace waving on every hill, from every dome, minaret, and tower of Asia? In a word, why have not earth and heaven lifted up the voice of triumph, and shouted, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ." We leave you to infer the answer, and be ready to give it when God shall make inquisition for blood.

3. We cannot close these remarks without dwelling for a moment upon the obligations to the cause of Christianity, which are shown by this subject to rest upon the whole community. With such facts and reasoning as have now been laid before you, it seems hardly possible that any reflecting mind can withhold from Christianity the award which we have rendered it. And yet it may be feared that, with many, this cause is to their depraved nature what the sunlight is to a diseased eye—the source of their acutest pain. Were it in their power, if we may judge from their spirit and actions, they would banish it from the world. And why? What evil hath it done? Or to what mischief doth it tend? What harm could ensue if its doctrines were universally received—if its spirit were universally diffused in society? And what if all men should become just, temperate, truthful, lovers of purity and good order? And what if the spirit of benignity, philanthropy, and universal charity, should come over the entire public heart?

Or if it were not absolutely the whole heart of the community that was sanctified by its power, but only generally renovated by its spirit, what is there to apprehend from such a state of things? True, in such a case depravity would stand unmasked by the light and power of surrounding virtue. Libertinism could no longer riot upon innocence and beauty. Cupidity and avarice could no longer glut their limitless maw upon the poor and defenseless. Lust and hate, envy and revenge, and every dire passion of the human heart, for want of external objects to feed upon, would consume their possessor, and nothing could save him from this precursor of an endless flame.

Such will be the result, when "every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and Redeemer."

The religion of the Bible teaches us that "denying ourselves of all ungodliness and every worldly lust, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this evil world." It commands chastity, sobriety, peace, brotherly kindness, justice, truth, benevolence—in a word, "whatsoever is pure, whatsoever is lovely, whatsoever is of good report." Nor is this gospel in word only; it comes in "demonstration of the Spirit, and in power, and in much assurance."

And with what effect it has lifted up a standard in the land, we have in part already seen in the moral elevation of the Anglo-Saxon race on both sides of the Atlantic. Beneath the auspices of a heaven-descended religion, justice and truth sit enthroned in the hearts of elevated man, and he may rest "under his own vine and fig-tree, and there be none to molest or to make him afraid."

What is it that gives value to our property? What is it that gives worth to our franchises as citizens of these United States? Is it not that justice, truth, and love of man, are ascendant in the public feeling and conduct? Is it not that a high sense of honor and integrity are among the controlling influences of society? I of course speak of the general state of morals among us. There are, I know, many painful cases which are exceptions to this state of things. But prostrate the influence of the Christian religion,—let her sabbaths be forgotten—let her sacraments be renounced—let her altars be thrown down—let her ministry be despised, and her temples forsaken—let her light be quenched, and the voice of her counsels and warnings be hushed—let her public memorials and her private prayers be struck out of the controlling influences of life and society,—and to what a horrid state of things should we be reduced at once! Rather, what wide-spread desolation would sweep over the nations! What would there be left, to save us from such ruin? Do you say, law? I answer, that that would be a mere mockery without moral virtue to enforce and sustain its administration. Do you say, intelligence? I reply that this, without the presence and coactive power of the Bible, would heighten rather than lessen the terrors of the reign of passion. History speaks upon this point. Could you have stood before Lyons, Toulon, or Nantes; could you have listened to the death-drop of the guillotines of Aras, Paris, and Orange; you might have seen the sad fruits of such a reign, full-grown and ripe. The miseries of the French revolution were heightened by that very intelligence which, if it could not altogether have prevented it, should at least have subjected its process to the control of reason and humanity. No, my reader, it is impossible to fully estimate our indebtedness to Christianity. Giving, as it does, value to our possessions, safety to our persons and rights, zest and perpetuity to our friendships, aliment and stability to that public virtue upon which the whole fabric rests, is it unreasonable to ask of you *hearty* acceptance and support of a cause which sustains the civilized world?

SERMON XVIII.

Love to God and Man—Christian Union.

BY REV. JAMES V. WATSON,

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"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself."—Luke x, 27.

THESE words are enforced in the context by a most startling commentary, and form the Saviour's reply to a "certain lawyer's" inquiry, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" An inquiry of the highest moment, though urged, perhaps, from the unholiest of motives. They teach, then, the way to heaven. They constitute the gospel touchstone of Christian character. Ages of weal or wo are here balanced upon a first and changeless truth. The final destiny of every man will brighten or blacken for ever, according as he may experience and practice "this scripture." Christ is not here to be understood as undervaluing the essential atonement, and reposing the condition of human salvation upon a sublime and immaculate morality. The holy affections and lofty virtue enjoined and taught in this text cannot purchase heaven; but they contitute the essential qualifications for its society and service.

The theme imbodied in our text is love to God and man; and, in drawing upon it for the matter of a discourse, we shall attempt, as far as we pursue them, a correct and *practical* answer to two inquiries:—

I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN LOVING GOD? and,

II. WHAT IN LOVING OUR NEIGHBOR?

First. *What is implied in loving God?* It is not merely to admit his existence and the truth of his Bible. It is not to discourse eloquently upon the majesty of his works and wonders of his providence. It is not to soar aloft on fancy's fairy wing, indulging the fervors of a mere poetic sentimentality. A love for flowers and stars may exist with a loathing of holiness. Fashionable oratory often says many fine things about the "Sovereign of the universe;" and poetry finds his name and his greatness inscribed all over the face of the firmament: but the spirit of oratory and poetry, with their beauteous creations and truthful effusions, may hold the heart spell-bound with enchantment; and still it may be "enmity to God." Can Satan himself fail to feel the overwhelming oratory of the mighty truth, that God is everywhere, and great and glorious in everything? But he never feels any moral approbation of God, yearnings after him, and clingings to him. "He believes and trembles." Bad men may fear God when danger threatens and thickens around them. When awakened conscience brings to their recollection their broken vows and lives of rebellion, tears may start, and a quaking may get hold upon them; but God is not loved: "for, where love is, it casteth out fear." Love to God does not consist merely in the free flow of those generous sympathies and chivalrous impulses of our nature with which some characters are so highly endowed, and which prompt them to frequent and often daring deeds of mercy. It does not consist in those amiable qualities of the heart which throw such an attraction around some members of the social circle. It consists not in that philosophic fortitude—that magnanimity of demeanor—that rigid observance of some of the cardinal virtues, often so loudly praised. Various are the forms of corrupt nature. And as the human hand thrust into a dark room retains for a time some bedimmed rays of solar light; so the fallen human heart seems at times to reflect, in sullied lustre, rays of its primitive greatness and glory. A splendid exemplification of some single virtue often characterized the worthies of heathen antiquity. But the heart unrenewed by divine grace is ever antagonistic to God, "fully set in the sinner to do evil." To do everything "to the glory of God" is not the supreme motive to which every other is subordinate in *any* heart into which the Holy Spirit has not breathed a new life. But sensuality and selfishness, joint monarchs, sit enthroned upon every unrenewed heart, appropriating to themselves, with miserly monopoly, every affection and energy that rightly belongs to God: "They worship and serve the creature more than the CREATOR, who is God over all, and blessed for evermore."

Men often testify the profoundest respect for the forms of the sanctuary, without sending up a single affection of the heart to that God to whom these services are offered; and they often relieve distress, in the indulgence of the sympathetic impulses of our common nature, when "God is not in all their thoughts" or affections. A love of praise, a hope of gain, or fear of punishment, are restraints to which much, if not most, of the *practical* goodness, morality, and virtue, in the world, are attributable. These motives to virtue are not to be wholly reprehended. They have their place in the scale of what is laudable. But the error of men consists in making these motives supreme. They have usurped the claims of the Deity, when love to him should at all times be the sovereign impulse of our nature. "Thou shalt walk in the fear of the Lord, and love him with all thy heart."

But with hearts that repulse God, love to forget him, continually prone to evil, how shall we obey this injunction? We *cannot* obey it without availing ourselves of the spiritual assistance tendered us in the gospel: "The Ethiop cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots." When Adam was first created, the innate impulses of his heart were toward the glorious "Father of his spirit;" the constitution of his nature was holy. And as it is a law of matter for kindred elements to attract each other and seek to mingle, so is it also a mental law for congenial minds to seek association and communion—and so also, *morally*, it is an eternal law for similar moral natures to attract each other, and flow together by kindred affinities. Adam was created in the "image of God." To love him, was coetaneous with his consciousness; and the heaven of his soul was to consist in the everlasting development of this affection. All the outgoing glories of the Godhead were to reciprocate it—the infinitely varied achievements of Omnipotence to minister to its indulgence. But of this noble endowment of our nature, which would have lifted us toward God for ever, and changed us "from glory to glory," sin has shorn us. The diseased heart loathes the "waters of life." To speak of neutrality in the moral universe, is a solecism: "For he that is not for me is against me." The heart unsmitten by sin would have been synonymous with love; but now, unregenerate, it is a synonym for "enmity" to God. Here is the poisoned wound, of which a fallen world lies bleeding and fevered to madness! He, "in whom we live, move, and have our being," lives not in our love. And the heart that excludes God, "is dead in sin"—totally destitute of bliss and goodness. "In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." The possessor of such a heart—awakened to the consciousness of its disinclination toward God, perceiving the moral blessedness and beauty of loving God and his law, enthroned in eternal fitness—bewails his want of capacity. Writhing under the "bondage of sin and death," he exclaims in agony, "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver from the body of this death?" Such is the state of the fallen heart with the light of the divine law flashing full upon it. Penitently to feel, deplore, and confess its helpless guilt and depravity, and need of a Saviour, is *conviction*. For the heart to be retouched by the same all-powerful Spirit that made it at first—in Scriptural language, to be "created anew," "born of the Spirit"—is *regeneration*. And the first emotions of affectionate, moral approbation for God, his truth, and his image, that succeed this spiritual change, are the beginnings of love to God—the buddings of a new and blissful life—the gushings forth from salvation's well in the soul: "For the fruit of the Spirit is love." *Sanctification* is this love, reigning supreme and triumphing over everything that opposes. "All" the "mind" learns of God; "all the heart" loves, with "all" the outlay of its "strength." Knowledge is as fuel to this heaven-lit flame; and self-denial but prunes it to purer brightness. And this "beauty of the Lord

God" upon the soul may grow, ever developing new charms, through the longest life; the hues of immortal glory, in sweet and pensive mellowness, it will shed over the welcomed hour of mortal dissolution; and the soul it will fit for its flight to dwell among the "angels of God," and for the ever-endearing companionship of the ineffably glorious "Father of spirits."

Love to God, then, is not the offspring of nature or of earth. However chastening the educational discipline to which it may be subjected; however rich in scholastic embellishments; however excelling in social refinements; kind, bland, and fascinating in etiquette; the carnal heart has no attraction for God. There are some substances in chemistry which have no affinity for each other, and which will not coalesce until a third chemical agent is introduced. The agency of the Holy Ghost in the restoration of the fallen heart to a spiritual union with God is a great first truth of the Bible: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God." And hence the prayer which inspiration hung on the lips of the sceptred saint of Israel: "Create in me a clean heart, O God! and renew a right spirit within me—take not thy Holy Spirit from me."

This renewal of the heart involves the present happiness and future heaven of the soul. The relation between God and Christians is described in terms of the most touching tenderness. He is their "Father" and "Friend," whose faithfulness and love "are everlasting;" and they are his "children" and "little ones," "led by his Spirit," and "heirs" of all the gifts of Infinity. In speaking of such a destiny, words become powerless, and the mind adores in silent, reverential awe. But supreme love to God is as essential to its fulfillment as existence. Love to God is the life, the law, the light and beatitude of angel natures. It binds all heaven in harmony, and prompts all its transports. As a vast central sun, it covers the celestial land with glory, and warms into life its eternal bloom. It is the element by which the soul was destined to be nourished and compassed. It is the great law it was at first made to obey. To seek to be happy without loving God, is as great folly as to seek to exist independent of God. When has the history of the world furnished an example of happiness commensurate with the wants of the soul, but in the "faith, hope, and charity" of the Bible! The existence of the soul is denied the name of "life," till the affections are led up through Jesus to the throne: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth upon him." To seek for bliss in aught else, but in entering the "strait gate" of gospel conversion, is to be the perpetual sport of disappointment; yea, more, to "sow the wind and reap the whirlwinds" of "everlasting fire." It is a truth, fixed as the pillars of heaven, that religion is the staple necessity, as well as the satisfying good, of the soul—"the one thing needful."

Love to God, like light in nature, sheds a charm on all it touches, and stamps every act with virtue. In the sight of Him "who searcheth the heart and trieth the reins" acceptable obedience must be prompted by holy motives. Like salt, that must needs be mingled with every acceptable offering of the altar, love must consecrate every act of worship, for the offering without it will result in a Cain's reception. Without this, the language of earth and heaven—"the gift of prophecy, and understanding all mysteries, and all knowledge"—faith, that unseats "mountains"—the impoverishing of self to enrich others, and courting the martyr's flame, are but noisy qualifications and profitless penances. An equally merciful and encouraging test of acceptance! Precious in the sight of God may be the "mite" of the widow, as the wealth of Solomon!

Love to God not only fits man for intercourse with his Maker, endowing his soul with the joys of both worlds, but it alone fits him for intercourse with his fellow-men. It imparts dignity and safety to every relation; tenderness to every tie; and sweetens and exalts all the circles of affection. Like the authority of Jesus upon the Sea of Galilee, it holds submissive the uprisings of rebel passions; and peace and tranquillity repose where love reigns. It alone awakens sympathies in the heart of man, that lead him forth delighted on missions of mercy, "to raise up the bound down and bind up the broken-hearted." Where, but under the power of the gospel, do those charities start into life that bless and adorn society? Where, in the history of the wastes of paganism, has there ever appeared a living benevolence, so warm and so noble as to seek, by systemized efforts, to ameliorate the condition of the race? to erect among its countless forms of architectural magnificence a house of mercy—a refuge for the wo-withered children of misfortune; to dry up the tears of the orphan and the widow, "and let the oppressed go free?" Gentilism is without great and generous sympathies; cold, cruel, selfish, and dissolving; striking asunder every bond of humanity—"without natural affection." When did benevolence ever flow forth in a living stream of healing balm upon the miseries of man, but as the fruit of the regenerate heart, and a *form* of love to God? Unconverted men, continuing such within the warm sphere of its heavenly influence, may indeed be made better by the contact, and induced to encourage the *begun* work of blessing. Spiritual regeneration is the hope of the race: "Ye are the salt of the earth." This love, of which we speak, is the most powerful principle in the universe. In the heart of the Almighty it prompted to the "unspeakable gift" of Calvary. In the hearts of the martyrs it distanced the love of life, and whitened the earlier battle-fields of the cross with their bones. The love of Christ constraining us, every individual of the race becomes a neighbor and a brother. It is the only sovereign that selfishness acknowledges. Fired by this celestial passion, it has an ear for every tale of wo, and a heart that feels it "better to give than to receive." And the treatment which self would desire in similar circumstances, is sacredly meted out to a neighbor. The heart, under its sacred dominion, becomes godlike, and embraces a world in its folds. The essence, abridgment, and sum-total of true religion, is love to God and man. All creeds that give not a fundamental prominence to this truth are false. Faith, repentance, the sacraments and ceremonies of religion, are but preliminaries and promotives of this high and holy end of our being. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind, and strength; and thy neighbor as thyself." But,

Second. *What is implied in loving our neighbor?*

It implies that we act from an enlarged and vivid sense of the greatness, the susceptibilities, and the worth of the soul, and of our accountability to God. In every impression made upon human character in the treatment of our fellows, we are exerting an influence that reaches forward to the coming judgment. To those even who have little or nothing lovely in nature, grace, or conduct, to awaken in the breast sentiments of affection for them, we should be actively benevolent, for human nature's sake, and for God's sake: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you." But those of the "household of faith" are "shut up" to love each other by innumerable endearments. They boast one Bible, revealing one common Father, Saviour, Sanctifier, and heaven. Their foes and fears, trials and triumphs, joys and hopes, are one: "one body, one Spirit, one Lord, one hope, one faith, one baptism." It would scarcely seem possible for Christians to love each other *less* than they do. I would that it could be said, that it is scarcely possible that they should love each other *more* than they do.

Paraphrasing the apostle's account of the practical workings of this love, given by him in that distinguished chapter, the thirteenth of 1 Corinthians, and there denominated "charity," we close this head of our discourse.

"Charity," says he of the "third heaven," is *indulgent;* leaving "vengeance" with God, to whom alone it "belongs," it disarms an enemy by the power of its own charms. It "suffereth long, and is kind." It is above that weakness, degenerated into meanness, the suicide of its own peace, and the poltroon traducer of the merits of others—"*Charity envieth not.*" It is self-possessed without insensibility, and always ready without rashness. It "vaunteth not itself." Ornament but disfigures it, and ostentation blinds it. The only rewards it seeks are the sweet memories of miseries relieved. Concealment is the closet of its devotion, from whence, like God, its Author, it often dries the tears of grief with an invisible hand. "Charity is not puffed up." On her highest mission of mercy her robes were "swaddling clothes," and the throne of her authority the cross. Disdaining the hollow compliments, and often hypocritical etiquette of the world, charity is ever mindful of the courtesies and civilities due to rank, office, and individuals. Good manners are among the fruits of true religion: "Doth not behave itself unseemly." All her possessions are on the altar: "She eats and drinks to the glory of God." "Charity seeketh not her own." She will wave her just right to secure a greater good: "If a man take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also." "Patient in tribulation," she possesses her soul amidst the many appeals made to fretfulness and anger; her submission imparting grace to affliction and sublimity to death. It is like the bow of beauty, encircling the brow of the tempest, and embracing the track of its ruin. "Charity is not easily provoked." Not forward in judging others; unsuspecting, because pure in her own motives. "Thinketh no evil." Charity desireth not the success of error, though discovered in her own long-cherished creed, and mourns over the misfortunes of its foes. "Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." In sympathy with the melting compassion of the cross—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"—charity blesses the hand that smites it, if souls may but thereby be saved, and glory shed on the name of Jesus. "Beareth all things—endureth all things." Confident of the omnipotence of truth, she sweetly anticipates the final overthrow of error. "Hopeth all things." And when sin and darkness career over earth with a dominant step, she works and waits, without croaking or complaining, regaling her ears with the lays of the prophets who sing the universal reign of Christ—looking into her Bible and abroad on the book of Providence, assured that "all things shall work together for good," she hears the coming voices of the coronation angels, and joins in the rehearsal for the millennial morning, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever." Her home is the bosom of God, and her walks the circuits of the world. The accident of color, cast, creed, or clime—the fact that the recipient is a national, or personal enemy, forms no obstruction; chills not her ardor, nor lessens her bestowments. The gifts of love are regulated only by the necessities of the receiver, and limited only by the furthest bound of ability. "Charity never faileth."

Love distinguishes faith from belief; and hope, as a harbinger, goes forth into the future, and up to heaven to gather fuel for the sacred flame: "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three: but the greatest of these is charity." "God is love." May his "will be done on earth as it is done in heaven."

I close with a single inquiry. With such a religion, what is to prevent the union of Christians? I may think the creed of my brother abounding more in "hay and stubble" than my own. But does it make paramount the vital truth we have been considering? Breathes its votary the spiritual life of love? He reflects my Father's image—"the family likeness." Assuming that there are more errors in the tenets of my brother than in mine—if, in spite of those errors, the dove-like visitant from on high has "quickened" him to "walk in love," shall I refuse to love what God has loved and made lovely? Engrossed with "tithing the mint"—straitened in the boundaries of sect—shall I say in "deed," "Not so, Lord, for I have never eaten anything common or unclean?" The truth is, all that "hold to the work of the Holy Spirit in the conversion and sanctification of the sinner," have a basis of union firmer than the "mountains round about Jerusalem."

And having the *invisible*, why so little of the *visible*, union? Having a spiritual union, why weaken it by absurdly making a *mental* agreement the condition of membership? Is it a fixed law, that the impressions received by all minds from the divine communications should be identical? Are honest differences of opinion sins? Is it not rather in Scripture, as it is in nature—a few first obvious truths, of essential moment, are within the reach of the "wayfaring man, though a fool," while ample room is left for speculation and conjecture? And what *two* minds shall look out upon this vast and shadowy deep, and continue to receive impressions just alike? In this view of the subject, we see divine wisdom giving encouragement to inquiry, and caution to presumption. We are not to be understood as denying to faith moral character. But the faith, for which in the gospel we are to hold such a fearful responsibility, relates specifically to those few first and unequivocal truths, in reference to which it is cheering to reflect, that all Christians abounding in the "fruits of the Spirit" have always substantially agreed. How brief and simple the "confession of faith" that saves!

Easy as is the apprehension of saving faith, is it asked, "Why, then, the prevalence of heretical creeds in the world?" Without giving the full answer the question admits, it is enough to say, that nothing is clearer than that they originate less in ignorance than in depravity. That the fault is in the human heart, and not in the ambiguity of the Scriptures. This sorrowful truth has been a distinct theme of prophecy. But it is not true, as above intimated, that Christians, as such—men adorned with "the fruit of the Spirit"—materially differ. They all see alike those great principles of the gospel, which stand out like the mountain in the deluge, the resting place of faith. They possess, indeed, mental variety, and view under varied angles of vision. Variety with essential sameness is just what we might look for. Hence the denominational phases of the Christian world is a natural result—a divine permission — a privilege — and a blessing. A blessing abused, if it prevent the union of Christians: "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God." Christians are wont to confess the ease with which the titles of different orders to the family of fellowship are ascertained. Without fear of being misunderstood, how freely do they employ the phrases, "Are they evangelical?" "Is he orthodox?"

And is there a sect in this country to whom we refuse these fraternizing appellations, but what are more or less ephemeral in their existence, and unsettled in their views? But especially are they marked by the destitution of the genuine leaven of love. Men may not, indeed, be as good as their creeds would make them, but they are seldom ever better. "And hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." Love, then, is the true basis and test of Christian union. And with the "same spirit," and with a religious belief essentially the same, what, I ask again, shall stand in the way of Christian union? Nothing, certainly, but the want of this love, and the practice of what will ever keep their possessors in moral poverty—an ultra-conservatism in reference to things indifferent—a stickling tenacity for sectarian peculiarities—wandering in the chilly region of speculative orthodoxy — dogmatically drawing inferences from awful and inexplicable attributes—exalting, unduly, minor points of doctrine—bandying freely the technicalities of sect, but too often the "shibboleths" and landmarks of bigotry—denominational jealousy; forgetting that the true interest of one is the true interest of all. But let a genuine "brotherly love abound," and these demons of discord, and "little foxes" that fret and cripple the vines, will fly before it, as diseases and devils fled at the bidding of Christ. There will be a struggle for the greatest possible agreement, and the least possible disagreement. Christians will rejoice that there is so much in which they can agree, and so little in which it now becomes so sweet to "agree to disagree."

"Finally, brethren, let brotherly love continue." "Zion put on thy strength!" We have quite too long fought the common foe divided. Thank God, the recent noble movements in favor of Christian union; the not altogether unsuccessful attempts to give to it a form and tangibility, bespeak a brighter day for the church. Haste, haste the answer to the Redeemer's dying prayer. He looked to it as the dawn of millennial morning—a period of universal faith;—"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

SERMON XIX.

Christian Discipline.

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"Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican."—Matt. xviii, 15–17.

If we except the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, no theme presents a stronger claim to our consideration than Christian discipline. It is to the due observance of this we are to look for the maintenance of practical godli ness, without which it is vain to talk of Christian experience, or place any reliance on our belief in Christian doctrine. In treating upon the subject of Christian discipline, its object, its mode of administration, and its importance, will furnish our leading heads of discourse. But as the general range of this subject would be too wide for our present purpose, extending to various branches beyond the scope of the text, we shall take it up only as it relates to offending members of the church.

I. WE SHALL FIRST ASCERTAIN THE OBJECT OF CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE.

1. This, with many, is made to consist in redressing their own grievances, or in recovering some violated personal right. Others place it in purifying the church by the excommunication of all delinquents, whether they have been guilty of immorality, imprudence, or a breach of discipline. And a third class, in punishing the offender, or in the infliction of a judicial penalty upon him. But the great object, according to our text, lies in reforming the offender himself, by the means which our text prescribes.

2. It is admitted that the redress of our personal grievances, the purifying of the church from corrupt members, and the punishment of offenders, considered as *disciplinary* rather than judicial, are to be reckoned among the objects of Christian discipline; but in the *higher* object—the reformation, and consequent salvation, of the offender—all these, where that object succeeds, are clearly embraced; for should the offender be truly reformed, these minor objects, as a thing of course, would be realized through his own agency; ample restitution would soon be made to any he has injured, as in the case of Zaccheus; the church would be effectually purified by the reformation rather than the expulsion of a member—a result entirely congenial with her better feelings. And his keen self-reproach, the bitterness of his grief arising from a sense of the wound he had inflicted upon the cause of Christ, would be a severer punishment than all the ecclesiastical penalties that could be heaped upon him. In the same proportion, therefore, as the subordinate objects of Christian discipline are desirable, we should exert ourselves to reform the offender as the most effectual means of securing them.

II. THE MODE OF ADMINISTERING CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE.

1. On this point there is too little uniformity, the mode of administration usually being found to vary with the object it is intended to achieve. Those who look upon self-redress as the sole object of Christian discipline, are often exceedingly troublesome in their application to the church for justice; and, feeling little regard for any one's interest but their own, they seem to forget that others have rights as well as themselves, or that the awards of justice might possibly go against them, in the issues they make with so many of their brethren. The idea that they have surrendered a portion of their individual rights for the benefits of society scarcely enters into their thoughts; and hence, while they have nothing to sacrifice for the common good, nothing to give for the support of religious institutions, the church which they have joined for their own exclusive benefit, and to which they esteem their bare names an honorable acquisition, must sacrifice everything for their sake. Rights which they never possessed in any capacity, or which they have vested in the government of the church for the due regulation of society, are claimed; and if their claim is not allowed—if they are not permitted to rule, or to monopolize the prerogatives of the church without resistance—they feel that they are injured, that they have cause of just complaint; and, if the evil can be identified with some individual belonging to society, that they are entitled to redress by the official interposition of the church, as if she were organized, with all her privileges, authorities, and institutions, for their accommodation.

2. Those who undertake to purge the church from all her delinquent members, as the great object of Christian discipline, must adapt the means to the end also. With them, in general, the first step is to take up a systematic course of evil speaking, collecting all the faults of the supposed offender, whether real or imaginary, and reporting them with no little exaggeration, that they may pave the way for his expulsion by prejudicing the society, who are to sit in judgment upon his case, against him. A show of following the direction of our Saviour in the text, however, must be kept up: accordingly they "go" to the offender, "and tell him his fault;" but, upbraiding him as an enemy

instead of "admonishing him as a friend," he is rather alienated than gained by their pious "labor;" and when they have loaded him with their accusations, reproaches, and abuses—when they have freed their tender minds by telling him all that was in their hearts, without "gaining him," then, "taking with them one or two more," *of congenial spirit*, they endeavor to "catch him in his words," that they may be able to convict him before the church. Having now taken the first and second steps of gospel labor without success, or rather having made these preliminary arrangements for the conviction of the offender, they "tell it unto the church," demanding her interference, not as an ecclesiastical judicatory to determine the guilt or innocence of the accused by a proper trial, but as an executive functionary to administer a decision which they have already made, or to cut off a member on whom they have already passed the sentence of condemnation. The mandate is issued with the authoritative sanction,—"hereof fail not at your peril!" To their dictum the cringing church must implicity submit, nor fail to recognize their supremacy, by executing the sentence they have pronounced upon the offender, on pain of the withdrawment of their membership, or at least of their support! Menace, in advance, is their *ad captandum* resort.

3. The same correspondence of the means to the end is apparent in the proceedings of those who make the punishment of the offender the object of Christian discipline. The *lex talionis* is made their only rule of action in dealing with offending brethren. They virtually say, by the mode of administration which they adopt in church trials, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay;" and if a requital in kind, as "an eye for an eye, or a tooth for a tooth," be impracticable in some cases, still the law by which they are governed knows no mercy, and summary justice must be visited upon the head of the offender: he must "be rewarded" *even here* "according to the deeds done in the body."

With such objects and modes of Christian discipline in the management of church difficulties, the greatest evils must be expected to follow; and to this cause more than any other, nay, than all others put together, may be traced our littleness of success in reclaiming our trespassing brethren, and maintaining good order in society. To attempt, through the intervention of church trials, to redress our own personal grievances, to purge the church of delinquent members by that cutting and slashing process which proceeds irrespective of their own well-being, or to wreak our vengeance upon the hated offender by the infliction of judicial punishment, is to make the church of Christ an arena of conflict where passions, and prejudices, and interests the most selfish, are brought into collision with the deadliest effect upon her prosperity! And yet there are few cases of church trial, it is to be feared, where these pernicious elements are not seen to mingle more or less in the administration of Christian discipline. This state of things calls loudly for reform; and I hope a remedy which infinitely exceeds the "one-idea" schemes of reform that are abroad in our land—an all-sufficient remedy—will be brought to view in the further elucidation of our text.

4. As it is the main object of Christian discipline, so far as offending members of the church are concerned, to reform and save them, so the means adapted to this object are those prescribed in the text under consideration, which we shall now proceed to analyze and explain.

(1.) The first step in the process is described in the following language:—"If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone;" and this step is divisible into three constituent points, which we shall distinguish by changing the emphasis as we proceed with the explanation. "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his *fault*," that is, *any* fault he may have committed, whether personal or otherwise—any fault by which he himself is liable to be injured. I am aware that many limit the direction here to personal offenses: "If thy brother shall trespass against *thee*," say they, that is, if he shall inflict on thee a *personal injury*, "go and tell him his fault:" but when we consider that our chief business with the offender is to reform him, and that there is more hope of success where we have no personal connection with the evil to be cured, we are compelled to maintain, in opposition to such an interpretation, that offenses in general, without any limitation or restriction, are intended. In confirmation of this view, St. Paul says to the Galatians,—"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault," that is, *any* fault, "ye who are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." And then, every offense of which any one is guilty in the church is a trespass against each of his brethren as an *individual* whose *social* rights, at least, are violated thereby. Again: "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell *him* his fault;" that is, tell it to the offender himself, and to no one else. If it be publicly known, the repeating it openly could answer no good end, certainly, as the public are already in possession of the news, and will be able to wield it against the cause of religion with sufficient malignity without our aid. Or, if it be a secret to all but ourselves as individuals, it will be time enough to make "one or two others" acquainted with it when we shall have failed to gain our offending brother by a *private* interview, and need their assistance in taking the second step. It is no palliation of the offense that we did not originate the report against our brother, but only gave it to others as it was given to us; for the "*taking up* a report against him" that is already in circulation, like the passing of bad money, places us in the same class, and subjects us to the same penalty with the counterfeiter himself. Nor are we at liberty to dwell upon the faults of an absent person in private conversation, even where the subject is introduced to us by others: the article is contraband: we may not deal in it at all. And he who justifies the practice of evil speaking upon the plea that courtesy obliges him to entertain every topic of discourse which happens to be introduced, can have little knowledge either of Christian morality or of the proprieties of social life. Any individual mentioning the faults of an absent person in our presence, with an exception we shall hereafter notice, merits an immediate rebuke, which should be more or less severe according to circumstances; the very gentle admonition of Mr. Fletcher in such cases—"Well, let us pray for him"—furnishing an example of the mildest form. Or, if we carry the emphasis still further forward, the text will then read,—"If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him *alone*," that is, in the absence of all other persons. The least acquaintance with human nature will teach us that private reproof is far more salutary in its effect than public. It has very little tendency to awaken in the offender's breast that pride of character which, being kindled into mortification or resentment when he is reproved in company, arms him against the convictions of truth, and leads him to deny or justify the fault of which he has been guilty. On the contrary, when you "tell him his fault between you and him *alone*," the evidence which this method affords of your unaffected friendship can hardly fail to gain his confidence, and strike a chord in his heart that must vibrate to the voice of admonition.

(2.) Should we fail of success, however, after a thorough trial of our individual influence, which may sometimes be the case, we are required as a second step, which may not improperly be termed associated labor, to "take with us one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established." But, keeping in view the reformation of the offender, we should approach him with the double advantage of having selected our helpers with a special regard to the confidence he has in their friendship, and the genuineness of their piety. Sin is a moral disease; and he who has fallen under its influence by the commission of crime, should be treated in some sort like a sick person: instead of being neglected, or intrusted to unskillful hands, the most likely means for restoring him to health should be employed; he should be made the subject of our watchful solicitude, of our daily prayers before the mercy-seat, and of our tender care. How few, if such were the efforts put forth for the healing of backsliders, would fail to be reclaimed! How strong the hope, that scarcely one in a thousand of our offending brethren would be lost to the church, did we labor with as much activity and skill to recover a deserter from our ranks, as the world do from theirs! O, how seldom should we be called to mourn over a case of final apostasy, had we as much sympathy for those who are afflicted with the disease of sin, as for our natural friends who are laboring under bodily disease—as much sympathy for our spiritual kindred as for our kindred according to the flesh!

(3.) If we should still fail to "gain our brother," which must rarely happen under the circumstances, our Lord has directed us, as the third and last step of gospel labor, to "tell it unto the church," that her counsel, authority, and influence, may be added to the efforts already employed for the reformation of the offender. Tell it to the *church*—not to the *world:* public opinion, to which so many appeal for the trial, or rather for the condemnation, of their brethren, is not the tribunal to which we are referred in such cases by our blessed Lord; the rather, he says, "Tell it unto the church;" that is, lodge a formal complaint against the offending individual with the preacher in charge, or regular pastor, who is the proper organ of bringing him before the church for trial. This is an arrangement in which the divine wisdom and mercy are beautifully combined, the last resort being made to the only remedy which remains to so obstinate a subject; and as individuals who have taken the lead in the previous steps, we must feel greatly relieved when the offender whom we could not cure is handed over to the church of which he is a member. The anxiety and spirit of dictation which are manifested by those who have other ends to answer by the arraignment of the offender than such as are connected with his own final welfare have no place in our minds: we feel that the church, from the plurality of her number, the amount of her collective wisdom, and the experience she must be supposed to have in matters of Christian discipline, will be able to dispose of the case according to its real merits. Or, if injustice should now be done, the responsibility will rest upon the church, we having discharged our duty in bringing the accused person regularly before her. The general opinion is, that the dispensation of mercy on the part of the church ceases toward the offender the moment he is put upon his trial, or that the poor outlaw, having sinned away the day of grace by resisting the previous overtures of gospel labor; must be inevitably cut off if the crime alledged be proved against him; but the phrase, "If he neglect to hear the church," evidently implies, that if he *hear* the church, that is, *comply with her requisitions*, or give evidence that he is a true penitent before God, which is all she has a right to require, she has the prerogative of mercy, and may "remit his sins," that is, grant him an *ecclesiastical* pardon, and still retain him within the pale of her communion, even at this stage of the process. The idea that an individual proved guilty before an ecclesiastical court must be expelled for the credit of the church, whether he be penitent or not, is at variance with every principle of good government; the credit of the church can never require the withdrawal of her fellowship from a penitent offender, whom the Lord of life and glory has forgiven; *he is now a child of God—a brother beloved—now his fellowship is with the Father, and with the Son, and truly it should be with his brethren in the church.* He *had been* guilty, it is true; and who among his brethren had not? A rule or principle, therefore, which would throw him out of the church, for that reason would dismember the whole of us; and how would the ends of Christian discipline be answered, or the credit of the church be secured, by such a course of administration? In some instances, doubtless, the profession of penitence on the part of the offender requires *time* to test its genuineness. In a case of this sort, his expulsion should unquestionably take place: the church, to whom, as yet, he is only known as an impenitent offender, may now proceed against him in good faith; and though for himself he is fully conscious of his restoration to the divine favor, he should be satisfied with the reflection that his connection with the church is sacrificed to the operation of a rule the suspension of which would involve an amount of evil, as a general consequence, that must greatly overbalance the particular benefit he would derive from the continuance of his membership. But where the case is of such a nature as to afford the church reasonable satisfaction of the restoration of the offender to the favor of God, she is bound to "forgive him, not till seven times, but until seventy times seven." As it relates to an excluded person whom we have not been able to gain after passing over the entire course of labor prescribed in the text, our Lord says,—"Let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican," that is, as any other sinner, who is still entitled to our sympathies, our instructions, and our prayers. To pursue an excommunicated person with accusations and reproaches beyond the pale of the church, would be downright persecution. The expulsion of a member, whatever may be the magnitude of his offense, is punishment enough: at any rate, it is all we are authorized to inflict. And even this should be administered as a *disciplinary* rather than as a judicial measure; the reformation of the poor degraded culprit being still kept in view. Still it should be remembered that he is "delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the soul may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

III. WE COME NOW TO CONSIDER THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE AS IT RELATES TO THE TREATMENT OF DELINQUENTS.

1. We might here urge the purity of the church, which can only be maintained by the exclusion of incorrigible offenders, and the godly restraint thereby imposed upon her members generally; but passing over this consideration, the recovery of the offender himself, as the paramount object of Christian discipline, stamps it with infinite importance. The recovery of a lost child—O how absorbing! There is no call to which the heart of a parent responds with such overwhelming emotions! He searcheth diligently for the lost piece of silver—he goeth into the mountains for the lamb that has gone astray—he hails the return of the prodigal son with the highest demonstrations of joy; hence the pathetic exclamation of Jehovah when the children of his love—his ancient covenant people—had erred and strayed like lost sheep:—"How can I give thee up, Ephraim?" and hence the tears of our blessed Lord, when he wept over Jerusalem, saying, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." And shall the deepest sympathies of Heaven be enlisted for the poor backslider, and the church feel no interest in bringing her offending children to repentance? Ah! who can appreciate the value of an immortal soul—"its price all price beyond?" We have no plummet to fathom the depth of immortality—no line to measure the duration of eternal ages. The vast susceptibility of the soul for pleasure or pain, when associated with endless existence, is alone the measure of its untold value. How infinitely, then, must it cheapen the soul of an offending brother to look upon his situation with cold indifference, or to immolate his membership, so necessary to his continuance in the divine life, upon the altar of self-redress, a bigoted exclusiveness, or the judicial infliction of pains and penalties! We can have little claim to the dying love of Jesus, who "came to call sinners to repentance," and spilt

his blood upon the cross for their redemption—little claim to those tender Christian sympathies which glow in the bosom of a heaven-born soul—little claim to the better feelings of common humanity even, if the salvation of the offender do not engage our tenderest solicitude in the administration of Christian discipline.

2. The importance of attending to Christian discipline in the mode prescribed appears in a strong light, when we look at our covenant relation to each other as a Christian community. Society is a divine institution, the obligations of which are binding upon all its members: and as God has impressed upon us a social character, placing us in society for the purposes of mutual oversight and improvement, it is far from being optional with us whether we will take up a labor with the offending brother or not. We have no discretion in the premises—no right to bear in silence an injury inflicted upon us by a member of the church, or suffer the offender of any sort to pass unreproved, if we would. The taking up a labor with any brother who has gone astray, whether his offense be personal or otherwise, becomes at once our duty as the aggrieved party, and a right which the offender is authorized to claim at our hands, by the very terms of church covenant existing between us—a right we are no more at liberty to withhold from him than to take away his property, his reputation, or his life. The obligations and claims respectively of this covenant are greatly strengthened by the solemn promise we have made to watch over each other as Christian friends, to stand as sentinels upon each other's conduct, and to guard each other's interests by all suitable means.

3. In the absence of every other argument, however, the importance of attending in a proper manner to the rules of Christian discipline is clearly deducible from the command of our Saviour in the text under consideration: —"Go," says he, with absolute authority—"If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." As the language here is imperative, there is no discretion left us, either as to the duty enjoined, or the manner in which it shall be performed. We are not at liberty to begin with the last step and end with the first; or to take a part of the course and dispense

with the remainder, unless the object contemplated be accomplished before we get through: but in all cases of obstinate delinquency we are required to pass over the *entire process* in precisely the same order which the text presents, without the least modification or change. And this requirement, it should be kept in mind, is made by the same authority which has enjoined upon us the exercise of faith, of repentance, of prayer; leaving us no more option in the one case than in the other: in both, it is Christ's to command, it is ours to obey.

It only remains to draw a single inference from the subject, and answer a few objections which some have urged against the doctrine here laid down.

The inference to be drawn is, that our Lord, by enjoining a specific mode of executing Christian discipline, has plainly inhibited every other mode. Were the restriction imposed *negative* in its character, all beyond would lie open to us—any mode not embraced in the restriction might be practiced: but as it is *positive*, pointing out what we *shall* do rather than what we shall *not* do, we are absolutely limited to the mode prescribed. The offender is to be treated in the manner here specified, and no other. We have nothing to do with him either as it relates to himself, to the church, or to any personal claim we may be supposed to have in the premises, aside from our Lord's direction in the text. What then shall we say of those with whom the whole course of Christian discipline, from the first to the last step, is made to consist in speaking evil against the offender behind his back? They feel themselves under no obligation, it would seem, and, what is still worse, perhaps, they have no disposition, to trouble themselves with the reformation of the offender, by resorting to the appointed means. The publication of his faults, often exaggerated and blackened by the gall of their own lips, being far more congenial with their spirit, they presume to incorporate the practice with their creed, in utter disregard of our Saviour's direction. The only exception to the rule requiring that we shall speak of no one's faults behind his back, in Christian ethics, is where you have no other means of protecting an innocent person from the assaults of an enemy, than by acquainting him with the meditated attack. This exception, so uniformly allowed by ethical writers, is clearly authorized by the example of St. Paul, where he says to Timothy, in one of his epistles, "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: of whom be thou ware also." But when we consider that the apostle gave this caution to Timothy in a private letter, which never saw the light, so far as we know, till the coppersmith was no longer in a condition to be injured by its publication, and that he speaks with great reserve, saying no more than was strictly necessary to guard a Christian minister, young and inexperienced, "his own son in the gospel," of whom he had the particular oversight, from falling into the snare of an old adversary, we shall find no precedent here for those gratuitous attacks upon the personal character of individuals which amount to evil speaking. The general rule still remains in full force: "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." Tell *him* his fault, but "tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph!" *Above all, publish it not in the newspapers;* for the holding up of names, dignitaries, administrations, to public odium under the pretext of correcting their errors, is a deed of darkness—a work that belongs to the devil and his angels—a practice as distant from the spirit of Christianity as heaven is from hell—a low, malignant, cowardly practice, which can only be pursued in direct contravention to the doctrine of the text.

Objection 1. "But are we not to denounce sin everywhere? and especially in the church? Is it not written, 'Thou shalt in anywise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him?' that we shall 'have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them?'" Ay, the duty of opposing sin is clearly enjoined in the Scriptures: we are required to oppose it in all its multiform phases, "wrestling against principalities, against powers, against spiritual wickedness in high places, against the rulers of the darkness of this world," and the more the better; but when we come to the *manner* of discharging this duty, it is as clearly enjoined upon us to keep within the prescribed mode, avoiding all personalities, with the single exception already noticed. The imprudent friends of a cause are its greatest enemies, and they who apply the rules of Christian discipline in a rash, unscriptural manner, or undertake to cure the faults of an offender by exposing them to public censure, instead of taking up a Scriptural labor with him, are sure to defeat their own object. It is not enough that we fulfill our duty to the *letter*, much less that our object *only* is right, the *spirit* and *manner* to be observed in our movements are entitled to no little consideration.

Objection 2. "Well, if we *have* mentioned the faults of an absent person, we have said nothing but what was true." So much the worse for him; for had it been a mere fabrication it might have been easily refuted, and the injury would have been *temporary;* but as it was all true, a *permanent* injury has been inflicted. The notion that we have a right to tell anything about a person barely because it is *true*, has no foundation either in law or in morals. Mr. Wesley maintains that "evil speaking consists in saying *anything* about a person to his injury, whether true or false;" and the well-known legal maxim, "The greater the truth, the greater the slander," is made the basis of procedure in all criminal courts where personal character is assailed from malicious motives. Nor does it alleviate the evil that you speak with a nod of the head, a squint of the eye, or some other oblique motion; for inuendoes, of all language, is the most sneakish and deadly.

Objection 3. "But we only mention the absent person's faults to his *friends*, who would take no advantage of the circumstance." Worse and worse; for his enemies were lost to him before, and now you would deprive him of his friends—a calamity that is scarcely to be endured. "Nay, but we were careful to guard him against anything of this kind, by premising that we ourselves were his friends, and would not hurt the hair of his head." And this is the worst of all; as it will now be said that even his *friends* can no longer support him, or say anything in his favor. This is the very kiss of betrayal—the placing one upon a pinnacle that his fall may be the more fatal. Had you honestly announced that you were the *enemies* of the slandered individual, and *meant* to injure him, it would have come much nearer the truth, doubtless, and been far less likely to impair his reputation, or endanger the salvation of his soul by excluding him from those friendly associations he otherwise might have enjoyed.

Objection 4. "At all events, we felt it incumbent on us to put the public upon their guard by acquainting them with the character of a person by whom they were liable to be imposed upon." And did you feel yourselves called upon to guard the public against imposition by traducing a fellow-citizen in direct violation of the divine command? Will you say, then, "Let us do evil that good may come? adopting the maxim that "the end sanctifies the means? And who hath required this at your hands? The better way to guard the public against the depredations of imposture is to reform the villain, if he be a member of the church, by following the directions of the text: or, if this cannot be done, his expulsion from among us in due order will be a sufficient notice to the public of his true character. And to those who are beyond the pale of the church, we can only say, in the language of St. Paul, "For what have I to do to judge them also that are without?"

Objection 5. "Well, indeed, if we may not mention the faults of others, except in disciplinary proceedings, the interest of social intercourse must be reduced within extremely narrow limits." Then it is hoped there will be less gossiping among us, as its chief motive, in that case, would be taken away. But is there no relief of this great evil to be expected? Is the tongue to be laid aside as a useless member only when it can be employed in the work of slander and detraction? What a reflection upon our Maker, that he should give us a tongue for scarcely any other purpose than to scandalize our neighbor, whom he has commanded us to love as ourselves; or that he has made our social happiness to consist in devouring one another, by a practice he has so positively interdicted! As I am anxious, however, to relieve those who are so much embarrassed in their social intercourse by the restraints of virtue, I will venture to suggest that were they to employ one-half of the time they now spend in backbiting their neighbors in storing their minds from the Holy Scriptures, and other useful books, they might be furnished with conversational topics enough to occupy the other half without one syllable of evil speaking.

The beloved disciple says, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." But if to speak evil of a brother is to hate him, as it undoubtedly is, then whosoever speaketh evil of his brother is a murderer! Horrible thought—whosoever speaketh evil of his brother is a murderer! And how many murderers must there be in the church! O, gracious heaven! have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us; and rescue us from the murderer's hell, by removing far from us his blood-stained character!

There is no apology for the sin of evil speaking, the means of full information upon the subject being in our own hands. The language of that blessed "Word, who shall judge us in the last day," is, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice—speak not evil one of another—speak evil of no man—laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil speaking; as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word." And yet, under the full blaze of this heavenly light, there are thousands among us, it is to be feared, who are in the constant habit of evil speaking. The faults of the absent, which they are diligent to collect, furnish them a favorite theme for every occasion. Nor is there any respect of persons with them: the same measure is impartially meted to all the absent, whether friend or foe.

The proximate cause of this deplorable practice is, doubtless, to be sought in a want of experimental piety; but as the remote cause, it must be traced to general example—the example of parents, of the church, and, I blush to make the acknowledgment, of preachers also! With many, this dreadful habit, having been formed in early life, has grown with their growth, and strengthened with their strength, until it is scarcely more heeded by them than the pulsations of their hearts, or the respiration of their lungs.

"Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why, then, is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" Why should the languishings of Zion be mourned over from generation to generation as the effect of evil speaking, when there is an all-sufficient remedy provided in the gospel? The application of Christian discipline, in the mode prescribed, cannot fail to work a cure. This is the remedy in question; therefore, "if thy brother shall trespass against thee," do not permit the idea of self-redress, of purifying the church, or of punishing the offender, to supersede the main object of Christian discipline: least of all shouldest thou dare to speak evil of him by way of retaliation or reprisal, but—"go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that, in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." The direction of our Lord here marks the extent of human responsibility, by defining our duty in relation to an offending brother; and here our business with him must end.

SERMON XX.

Charity to the Poor.[*]

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"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.—Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."—Matt. xxv, 34–36, 40.

CHARITY, in the enlarged sense of that term, must be pronounced the characteristic feature of Christianity. It was from this divine principle that Christianity had its origin. The most sublime, as well as the most attractive description we have of the Deity is, that *God is love.* This is the fair and glorious radiance emanating from the great Supreme, and animating and blessing the universe of his creation. Nor has that aspect of love been veiled even toward the rebellious and apostate race of man. For God loved this world, though fallen: and so loved it that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. If there has been from eternity such another exhibition of boundless charity displayed to the universe, the intelligence has never reached our world. Man was a transgressor. The sword of eternal justice was unsheathed, and what shall prevent his utter ruin? Infinite charity, in union with boundless wisdom, presented the momentous response; and it was proclaimed in heaven and upon earth that a ransom was found.

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[*] Preached at Bromfield-street Church, Boston, Dec. 21, 1845, in behalf of the Ladies' Benevolent Society connected with said church.

Christ came—the great personification of charity. He came on an embassy of charity such as had never been conceived, save in the infinite mind. In the spirit of his mission—the spirit of divine charity—he humbled himself to a participation in the nature of the lost race, and He who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And blessed were the few years of his career among men. As he passed hither and thither, it was God with man. From his lips went forth words of infinite charity and condescension. As he moved amid the listening crowds, they heard him speak as never man spake. In his mighty charity he preached the gospel to the poor, he healed the broken-hearted, he proclaimed deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, and set at liberty them that were bound, and announced the acceptable year of the Lord. Wherever he came, disease fled at his approach. He looked upon afflicted and dying ones, and they revived and stood upon their feet, and leaped for joy. Without money and without price, he pointed out the paths of life to thousands. He went through all their cities and villages, teaching and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. His nature and his name was charity. He literally went about doing good to the souls and bodies of the multitude.

A few, and a few only, of the instances of his charity have been recorded for our admiration, and, so far as possible, for our imitation. There were many other things which Jesus did; the which, if they should be written, every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written. Thus he lived. His entire pathway beamed with the pure and brilliant effulgence of heavenly charity. As he approached, the waste places broke forth into joy, and together sung, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings; that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good; that publisheth salvation!" He is extended upon the cross, at length, and, dying there, his death was the life of the world. That death was the most illustrious exhibition of infinite charity that the universe had ever beheld. By the grace of God he tasted death for every man. He seized the cup of trembling from the pale lips of millions, and drank it to the dregs. The flaming sword was aimed at the sinner's heart; the Saviour leaped between, received the wound, and bled. From happiness ineffable he retired, and took upon him the burden of exceeding sorrow. The griefs of a world were laid upon him, and he bore them. From the pure sunbeams of infinite favor, he passed behind that awful cloud, and consented for a time to be forsaken of God, and forego his smiles, that those smiles might rest upon a race that had otherwise been for ever fallen—for ever unredeemed. He descended to this world bearing with him unbounded riches, and came and invited ruined man to partake of them and live for ever. For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye, through his poverty, might be rich. And now he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things!

Contemplate thus the great Christian scheme. This heavenly structure—this building of God—arose from the heavings of boundless charity. This mysterious and hallowed influence, compassing the eternal well-being of men; it was not merely an effulgence from the infinite mind—it was the mighty outbreaking from the infinite heart. There was amazing charity in the gift of Christ,—and when he came,—and when he ministered,—and when he died,—and when he ascended, and received gifts for men,—and opened the floodgates of salvation for the renewal and immortal life of a world.

Charity, then, is the grand foundation of the Christian structure. Let us pass, now, to a superficial glance at the genius of the structure itself, and impress ourselves with the fact that the result is harmonious entirely with its cause. He whose nature is charity, should he provide a system of salvation for any race of his creatures, might be supposed to present a religion with charity written upon its front, as among its capital features. Such is the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ. Every page of its sacred records sparkles with the enchanting radiance. God is love; and men, contemplating his character through his word, thus seeing as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. *It is more blessed to give than to receive*—a maxim which the wisdom of this world has never to this day been able to understand—is the fair proclamation of the religion of Jesus. This heaven-born system is the imbodiment of whatsoever things are kind, and benignant, and lovely, and compassionate. Christianity looks forth upon the varied sorrows of this world, and weeps at the sight. The poor and the wretched are her special care. She lingers not in the mansions of opulence and splendor. The palace may open its ample doors, and display its spacious and lofty apartments, with all their rich and dazzling scenery—while forms of beauty may walk there, whose every step is light and beautiful as the "radiant footstep of Aurora,"—and charming music may steal along those halls—and luxurious viands, borne from various climes, may greet the eye and invite the taste—and the cup of worldly pleasure, in its overflowing fullness, may there be drunk long and deeply;—yet from all that brilliant scenery religion retires, and chooses rather to walk amid lowly vales, and hastens to cheer with her presence the habitations of want, and delights to wipe away the tear from the cheek of sorrow, and pour the wine of consolation into the broken heart. "My son," she whispers, "despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, neither be weary of his correction. Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee. He is a strength to the poor; a strength to the needy in his distress; a refuge from the storm; a shadow from the heat. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." Then to the more prosperous and happy Christianity turns, and bespeaks their pity and beneficence in behalf of the destitute. I command thee, she proclaims, that thou open thy hand wide unto thy brother—to thy poor and to thy needy in thy land.

To the rich man inquiring the way of salvation, she responds, Go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.

To those who, in the midst of darkness and distress, would see brighter and happier days, she asks, "What does the Lord thy God choose? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thy own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy health shall spring forth speedily. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul, then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday."

Does any one inquire the way to great prosperity and abundance? Religion responds, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom." "And he that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth to the Lord, and that which he hath given will he pay him again."

If any would have some special help when the day of adversity comes, religion whispers, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble."

If any one delights that his prayers should be regarded in heaven, religion points him to Cornelius, who, while he prayed to God always, gave much alms to the people; to whom an angel said, "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God."

To him who would turn to God and receive his smiles, religion proclaims, "Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thy iniquities by showing mercy to the poor."

Finally, if any one longs to be welcomed to everlasting life, religion points such a one to the last great day, and bids him listen while the awful Judge, in the hearing of the universe, shall say to those on his right hand, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat; naked, and ye clothed me; sick, and ye visited me. And these shall go away to everlasting life."

Such is the genius of religion. So true is it, that "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is, that a man visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and keep himself unspotted from the world." The offspring of infinite charity, charity is its very nature, and it proclaims to all its lovers, "Freely ye have received, freely give."

We submit, secondly, that while the all-wise God has established with men a religion whose nature is charity, there is obviously a peculiar fitness in such an arrangement.

This world is a scene of much poverty and misery. Perhaps there is no village or neighborhood upon earth where there is not more or less of wretchedness. Christ said to his disciples, "The poor ye have always with you." And, in accordance with this declaration, we find the poor in every place—in every age. There are those who are literally poor; that is, destitute of the comforts of life. And there are those who are poor in respect to happiness; who, though they be not in circumstances of literal poverty, yet, from one cause or another, feel themselves afflicted, bereaved, and desolate. Sorrowing, weeping ones, meet you all along this vale of tears. On every hand are they who need the comforting smile of benevolence. Nor does the city, with all its riches and splendor, form any exception to this remark. Abundance of wealth, prosperity, and joy, is in the city—yet there, too, are poverty, suffering, and tears. If affluence is there, so are destitution and rags. If the palaces of opulence are around you, so, also, are the hovels of want. If fullness and luxury are there, so are desolation and hunger. If a thousand blooming and healthy countenances meet you every day along the streets, another multitude are laid away in the chambers of sickness—many of them never to be well again. If the song of mirth and gayety swells daily amid those dwellings, the cries and sobbings of grief mingle with the sound. If charming hopes are there, the shadows of darkness and despair are gathering deeply over the prospects of thousands. Have you never ascended into that gloomy garret, into which the light of day could scarcely find entrance, where lingered a feeble and forlorn widow, with little children dependent upon her for daily bread; one of them, perhaps, laid away in a corner of the room, sick and weeping; where scarcely a single comfort mingles itself with the wretchedness of the scene; where beauty and hope have perished; where every day is gloomy, and days more gloomy still are in the future? Scenes like these are around you, and scattered thickly along this world. Not to mention the myriads of paupers in this and other countries; other myriads, here and there, are struggling in the vale of poverty and suffering, whose sentiments of delicacy and modesty have never permitted them to apply for either public or private aid. They have seen happier days: perhaps they were once in easy circumstances, and mingled in elevated circles, and the associations of their earlier years were those of comfort and elegance; but they have passed away from those sunny bowers—a mysterious providence has reversed their allotment: the brilliancy of their early prospects has become eclipsed, and to former days of peaceful sunshine has succeeded a night cheerless and starless, beyond which no morning arises save that of eternity.

Such is the truth throughout this inhabited world. Ours is a suffering race. A few of us may, for a day or two, be partially exempted; yet we, too, in one form or another, are to meet suffering, terrible suffering. Truly "the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun; but if a man live many years and rejoice in them all, yet let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many." Griefs and woes, to a greater or less extent, await us all; while thousands and thousands are already encountering the tempest. Were the more prosperous and happy so disposed, it is in their power greatly to mitigate the sorrows of the poor and the unfortunate. We need a religion, therefore, whose direct influence will be to open our hearts, and quicken us to feel for the wants and sufferings of our fellows. We are selfish: some divine influence is requisite to turn away our eyes from self to contemplate the situation of others. We are proud: there is need that an influence should come upon us, helping us to recognize ourselves as part of a lost, ruined, and unhappy race, and aiding us to contemplate the suffering ones of earth as bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. We are cold and hard of heart: we need such a renewal as shall animate our sympathies, and teach us to make the sorrows of others, in some sense, our own, and to weep with them that weep. We incline to covetousness: our eyes need to be opened that we may see the proper use of riches—that "it is more blessed to give than to receive," and that the prayers of the poor are a more valuable inheritance than thousands of gold and silver. We need to be impressed that we are to act as stewards of God—as almoners of his bounty: that all things are his—the silver, and the gold, and the cattle upon a thousand hills; and that we are not to withhold good from our neighbor, when it is in the power of our hands to do it.

And such, precisely such, are the instructions and the spirit of our blessed Christianity. It is fit that men, passing together through a suffering world to the same eternity, should help and comfort each other; and hence the law of Christ is, that ye bear each other's burdens. Moreover, it is ordained that he that watereth shall be watered himself—and he that scattereth shall increase—and he that soweth largely shall reap also largely. It is as appropriate, as it is momentous and startling, that our admission to heaven at the day of judgment will be predicated upon our evangelical charity. If so, what, in the day of eternity, will become of that professed Christian who came and looked upon wounded, suffering ones—then passed by on the other side!

We submit, thirdly, that in the last great reckoning Christ will recognize these acts of charity and mercy performed toward his suffering poor, as done to himself.

Christ was pleased to select the destitute and suffering as more especially his representatives upon earth. In his sojourn here, the Son of man was himself poor. He who possessed all things emptied himself of all, that he might enrich a world. He claimed no house, nor land, nor place of repose. The foxes and birds were richer than he; for while they had their abodes, he had not where to lay his head. He passed from province to province, and from city to city, and as he came, there was no sign of riches. He rode not in a chariot, attended by a splendid retinue. He came not with observation: he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief: he was despised and rejected of men. The purest and holiest personage that ever mingled with mankind, he was, neverthess, destitute, and a companion and guest of the poor. Should the Saviour of men come into one of our cities, as he now and then visited Jerusalem, his personal appearance and his circumstances would harmonize with the poor of that city, rather than with the rich. His sympathies would be with the former, rather than with the latter; while, in selecting his lodging-place, he would probably enter the doors of some obscure family, whose names are scarcely known here, but are written and known in heaven. In preaching, too, it would be to the poor; while the men and women who move amid affluence and pride, and ride on the wheels of splendor, and revel in all the delights which this world presents, these would be absent. Christ would not be seen, nor would his voice be heard, throughout all that brilliant circle. He would not be welcome there.

The Lord Jesus Christ will never appear again on earth, as when he came to save lost men. Yet might that be—might he once more visit this world as a man of sorrows, destitute and having not where to lay his head; might he be in our immediate vicinity—to linger with us for a few days, and were it true that any gifts and hospitalities of ours might be acceptable to him, and afford him consolation and comfort; might some woman of Samaria be privileged to give him to drink a cup of cold water; and some penitent Mary be permitted to bathe his feet with her tears, and wipe them with the hairs of her head; and some eager Zaccheus, amid the crowd, might catch his eye, and hear him say, "Come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house;" and some Martha should have the privilege of preparing the table where Christ was to be the guest; and some Dorcas should be permitted to make with her own hands a garment for the comfort of his sacred person: were privileges like these to become ours, O! who would not prize them above very many good things which this world presents? Who would not submit to many sacrifices to be thus honored? Who would not forego the choicest repast, if that repast might go to refresh the hungry and thirsty Jesus? Who would not part with his goodliest, warmest garment, might it enwrap his chilled and trembling limbs? Who would not thread many a cold street of the great city, to find the house and the chamber where he might be lying in sickness? Who would not fly to the deepest, darkest cell, where Jesus might be imprisoned? Nay, who would not cross the seas, and traverse mountains and deserts, that they might perform these ministries to their afflicted, suffering Saviour? Whose heart would not yearn toward him with emotions unutterable? And who, in their longing, would not weep for the privilege of flying to the presence of that sorrowing one, and of being the first, and surest, and strongest, to bring the desired relief?

Charming vision! But this "Man of sorrows" is no longer here. He passed away, one day, and a cloud received him from mortal sight. He has retired to the heavens, and taken his place at the right hand of God, and will be there till his coming to judge the world in righteousness. The heavenly privilege of entertaining him personally belongs no longer to men. But what then? He is gone, it is true, but he has left his *representatives.* Departing heavenward, he proclaimed to those he left behind, "The poor ye have always with you. Forget them not. It is more blessed to give than to receive. And when I come again in my glory, and all the holy angels with me, I will welcome you to my everlasting kingdom—announcing to the world that inasmuch as ye blessed and comforted the weakest, poorest of my brethren, ye did it unto me."

It is not for me, as it was once for Zaccheus, to open the doors of my house for the admission of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not for me to see him sit at my table, and to tender to him the very highest and best hospitalities of which I am capable; but it is my privilege to do that which will be just as acceptable to him—which he will receive precisely as though it were done to him personally—for which he will love me just as fully and freely—and for which he will just as certainly and liberally reward me with his presence and smiles for ever and ever. If I help his poor and suffering children, he will receive it as performed for himself, were he in those identical sufferings. Amazing motive this to inspire us to benevolence! It banishes all ideas of sacrifice. It transforms our almsgiving into a privilege unspeakably desirable. Under its influence we begin to inquire, Where are the poor? Lead us quickly to some object of pity and suffering, that we may lavish upon him our charities. We who never asked for riches before, now begin to wish ourselves in possession of thousands, that we might more widely scatter comforts to the destitute; for of such beneficence Christ will say, "Ye did it unto me." Yet let the benevolent poor consider the widow and her two mites, and forget not that Christ only requires according to what we have, and not according to what we have not.

My hearers, therefore, will remember the poor. You will remember them especially in this inclement season, when often

> "Along the woods—along the moorish fens,
> Sighs the sad genius of the coming storm."

Garments, good and warm, I will hope, shall defend you whenever you meet the chilling blasts of this cold winter. At what time the fierce north wind shall sweep along the streets, or the wild spirit of the storm shall howl around these dwellings, you shall be safely hidden from the tempest; while the fire fair blazing shall pour forth for you its genial warmth. When you shall be hungry, your heavenly Father will spread for you the comfortable board, and you shall partake and rejoice. Most of you may not be rich, yet you will not be doomed to suffer. You will be warmed and fed. Various little comforts will meet you here and there, and many a voice of thanksgiving, and many a smile of delight, will cheer your abodes, while these wintry months shall roll away. And when it is all cheerful within your doors, and your little family circles are all well and happy there, your thoughts will sometimes wander away from that group. There will be times when you will draw toward the lattice, and look out into the cold dark storm; and as you look, you will think of the poor; and if there shall then come gliding along, the remembrance that your hand had been opened for their relief and comfort, that remembrance will be sweet and happy.

Father! as during this stern winter you shall rejoice at seeing your beloved children comfortably clad, that joy shall be elevated and enhanced, if accompanied by the remembrance that you have made comfortable some poor little child, that, but for your charity, would have suffered and wept.

Christian lady! as within the warm parlor, along some one of these wintry nights, you glance at your husband and children, and feel that with yourself and them all is peaceful and well; your peace shall flow more full and free if, in that hour, you may remember to have visited the lone widow, and helped, by your beneficence and goodness, to cheer her in her sadness.

Son or daughter! while along the dreary winter you may see your dear father and mother safe sheltered from the cold, it shall not disturb the pleasure of that sight to recollect that you have thrown the warm garment over the withered and trembling form of some "poor old man," and aided to smooth his pathway to the tomb.

Christian! if amid these coming days and nights some dark cloud shall come over your prospects—and some grief, bitter and unexpected, shall tear and crush your heart—and you shall sigh and weep in secret places, it shall be a soothing balm to your wounded spirit, if you may remember that the *prayers of the poor* carry up your name every day to God; and you shall now and then listen to soft whisperings coming as from the breath of angels, saying, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble."

"The poor ye have always with you." Why? Because "it is more blessed to give than to receive." They are *always* with you. Why? That ye may be blessed; for they cannot recompense you. Ye shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

"He spake, and my poor name he named;
Of me thou hast not been ashamed;
These deeds shall thy memorial be,
Fear not, *thou didst it unto me.*"

SERMON XXI.

The Existence of God.

BY REV. NELSON ROUNDS, A. M.,

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"For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse."—Rom. i, 20.

THIS text will receive some light by the following transposition: "For the invisible things of Him, that is, his eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen, or perceived from, or ever since, the creation of the world, being understood, or learned, by the things that are made."

Not that the idea of the divine existence is innate in man, nor that it is demonstrable by human reason alone, for facts are opposed to this. But the idea once suggested to the mind, as it has been among nearly the whole human family, by revelation or tradition, is capable of obvious, irresistible proof from the works of nature.

The nature of the argument is *a posteriori:* or we reason from effect to cause.

I. GROUNDS OF BELIEF IN THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.

1. God reveals himself by the works of nature. Nature is an effect: it must have had a cause. That cause is God.

More particularly: First. Every effect must have a cause.* You see the picture of a flower or a bird, and you ask at once, Who drew it? You behold the statue of a man, perfect in form and feature, and you inquire, Who was the sculptor? You behold an orrery, exhibiting in a beautiful manner the relative magnitudes, distances, and motions of the planets, and you commence directly to admire the skill of the inventor.

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* To show how deeply this first principle of reasoning is ingrafted in the original constitution of the mind, we would relate the following simple circumstance: We were once traveling with our little girl, (then but five or six years old,) in a carriage, and we were just passing a saw-mill not far from the road. The wheel and entire machinery were beneath, and entirely excluded from view. The pond of water was spread out in our view, and the saw was playing briskly up and down through the log. The little girl spoke out with great animation, and said, "Pa, see there! there is a man down in that water a sawing."

But how much more is a real flower, bird, man, or system of planets, the proof of a Creator! Who can survey a real flower, exhibiting its beauteous colors; a living bird, flitting through the air or singing from its branch; a living man, walking with countenance erect, intelligence beaming from his eye, and wisdom dropping from his lips, and not refer their existence to God? Who can contemplate the solar system without such a conclusion? Ascend, in imagination, till you have reached a point of observation from whence you can comprehend its length and breadth at a glance. The sun, larger than a million earths, glowing in the centre—all the planets, primary and secondary, revolving in their proper spheres, from Mercury, winging his rapid circuit almost within the borders of the solar blaze, to distant Herschel, wheeling his solitary rounds, in far-off fields of space, and measuring out, with giant tread, his years of centuries! See them all moving in exact harmony, and with the regularity of the most perfect timepiece, and you cannot but acknowledge, that the Hand which created them from nothing, balances them in empty space, and points them in the paths they travel, must be almighty.

Secondly. The same conviction is only confirmed when, upon a closer view, you observe in these several instances the adaptation of means to an end.

The plant is designed to be stationary, and accordingly its roots are firmly fixed in the earth. The bird was designed for locomotion, and hence in its wings we find a perfect apparatus for transporting it from place to place. Man was intended to control and govern all creatures for his own happiness, and accordingly he is endowed with an understanding that renders him capable of doing so: the human understanding! the most wonderful of the works of nature, and whose astonishing capacities cannot possibly be accounted for, but upon the ground of the existence of an Infinite Mind. The earth and the other planets were to be warmed and lighted, and the effectual manner in which these results are produced by the light and heat of the sun is matter of gratitude with us all. Vegetation was to be sustained, and hence the roots of plants and trees are so many mouths, to extract nourishment from the soil, while their leaves are for lungs, to inhale from the atmosphere those gases that are congenial, and to exhale those that are unwholesome.

Vegetation was to be propagated. And hence every plant is made to produce its own seeds. And in the work of sowing them, winds, waves, and animals, are all made to do their part. Seeds of fruit, and those that are farinaceous, are transported voluntarily by men and animals; those that are inclosed in burrs, by involuntary agents. Some kinds are furnished with wings, others with miniature balloons, and are thus transported from land to land. The hard shells of others are so many little ships, air and water tight, by which the tiny cargo has been transported across the Atlantic without injury.

The preservation and propagation of the animal kingdom, were it proper here to enter into the detail, would furnish still more striking instances of the adaptation of means to an end. And now can all these cases of design be accounted for without a Designer? We anticipate your answer.

But the construction and furnishing of this world were intended mainly to promote the welfare of the human family, and how admirably is this object accomplished! Do our lungs need air? Nothing is so free. Do we need food to satisfy our hunger? It springs up all around us. Do we require water to slake our thirst? Its limpid currents murmur at our feet. Do we want clothing to defend us against the changes of the seasons? It grows in our fields, or is brought to our doors upon the backs of the bleating flocks.

Again, the qualities of the different objects around us are adapted to promote our pleasure or profit. We instance only two; sound and color. The noise of thunder, the roar of the cataract, the howl of wild beasts, the rattle of the serpents, warn us of danger. The murmuring of streams, the hum of insects, the warbling of the feathered songsters, furnish us pleasure. The articulate sounds of the human voice afford pre-eminently both pleasure and profit. And do not these things bespeak a God? He that imparted musical tones to the winds and waves, and to that sweetest instrument in nature, the cultivated human voice, can he not distinguish sounds? He that planted the ear, can he not hear?

Why is the color of all the objects in nature mild rather than glaring? Because more grateful to our organs of vision. In that season of the year when the sun's rays are most intense the earth reflects a delightful green; whereas the dazzling brightness of snow is reserved to that period when the sun's appearance above the horizon is briefest, his beams most oblique, and most frequently shut from us entirely by clouds.

How beautiful the sky! not so by chance. Had the atmosphere reflected all the rays of light, it would have blinded us by its excessive brilliancy. Had it reflected none, it would have saddened us by its constant midnight gloom. But, reflecting only the blue rays, it forms an object which by day is pleasing to the eye, and by night, when sprinkled with stars, or cheered by the radiance of the smiling moon, is perfectly enchanting.

Why is the sun, at his risings and settings, shorn of half those fiery beams that flash from his mid-day chariot? Is it not that we may the better enjoy the charms of the morning and the evening hour?

And are all these effects without an intelligent cause? He that imparted beauty to the landscape, and gave their exquisite tints to the lily and the rainbow, can he not recognize colors? He that formed the eye, can he not see?

2. God is seen in providence: in providence, which connects vicious habits with disease, disgrace, and poverty, as in the case of the drunkard; and a virtuous life with health, wealth, and honor, as in the instance of those who habitually abstain from everything that intoxicates;—in providence, which leads so certainly to the detection and punishment of crime, and which pursues every criminal with the scorpion lash of self-condemnation, and otherwise couples affliction with vice sufficiently to show its heinousness, and warn the sinner of those awful retributions of eternity, of which his present stripes are only the prelude.

God is seen in providence as exerted in favor of that best and purest system of morals, the Christian religion. When we read the predictions of Israel's prophets, uttered thousands of years before their fulfillment, and observe how exactly they were verified, must we not conclude they were inspired by a Being who "was, and is, and is to come;" and unto whom "all his works were known from the beginning of the world?"

Granting the historic facts of Christ's advent and miracles—facts which never have been and never can be disproved—must not all exclaim as did Nicodemus, "Rabbi! we know thou art a teacher sent from God; for no man can do these miracles except God be with him?"

Must not that have been an almighty Agent, who could defeat the numerous combined and potent enemies that have risen up from time to time against Christianity; and who could secure it those glorious triumphs which all along have marked its progress? Surely every enlightened, candid observer of these events, must exclaim, "This is the Lord's doings, and it is marvelous in our eyes."

And, finally, the great acknowledged fact that the chief vicissitudes which have transpired upon earth, the changes of political dynasties, the rise and fall of nations, have conspired and are conspiring to one grand momentous result—the final downfall of wickedness and error, and the universal diffusion and establishment of the religion of the Bible in the world; does not this fact proclaim as with the voice of sevenfold thunder, that there is a God who is the Author of the Bible, the Arbiter of nations, and the moral Governor of the universe?

3. God reveals himself in the Scriptures by language. Here we listen to his voice. Here we have the portraiture of his moral character, and behold as clearly, perhaps, as is possible in this life, the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person: and that voice has an emphasis so commanding, and yet so simple and heavenly, and that character is so transcendently excellent in its several features, and so supremely grand and imposing in its united effect, that all, who will look and listen, must exclaim, not in the doubtful words of the wondering Æneas:

> "Haud tibi vultus
> Mortalis, nec vox hominem sonat,"

but in the language of a convinced and humbled Thomas, "My Lord and my God!"

4. Finally, God reveals himself to the soul by his Spirit. Does a man commit transgression? His conscience tells him that there is a God, whose laws he has violated; a God who has taken cognizance of the sin, a God who will bring him to an account for it in the day of wrath and revelation of his righteous judgment.

Are we faithful and obedient? Conscience approves. God speaks through that faculty, and declares not only his existence but his approbation. We *feel* that there is a God. Our souls are filled with the spirit of glory and of God. We experience the fulfillment of Christ's promise: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him." O Lord God, give us this precious evidence of thy existence to-day! And may we enjoy it for evermore!

Having now shown the truth of God's existence, by his works and his word, by the teachings of his providence and his Spirit—proofs abundantly sufficient to satisfy all candid minds—we proceed to some

II. IMPROVEMENT.

This doctrine lies at the foundation of all religious truth. This established, and the most important inferences follow:—

1. To the impenitent hearer. If there is a God, he is your Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer; and you are under infinite obligations to serve and obey him. If there is a God, Christianity is true; it has been instituted by his Son, fostered by his providence, and propagated by his power. God is all around you; holds the breath of your nostrils in his hands; knows your wicked hearts and lives, and holds you accountable for them. In your sins you are not safe one hour. The judgment-day is rolling around. Awful eternity is just at hand, and you are urged to repent and seek the favor of God this moment, by motives high as heaven, deep as hell, and lasting as infinite duration.

2. To Christians this doctrine is the source of great consolation. If there is a God, the Christian's hopes are all safe; death loses its terror; the grave its gloom; and the bright visions of heavenly bliss are a glorious reality. This consolation is perpetual: for the evidence of the great

truth of the divine existence pours in from every side. We have touched upon a few of the proofs: the number that might be brought is infinite. That there is a God,

"All nature cries aloud through all her works."

"The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." We hear his voice in the whispering breeze, the gurgling fountain, in the roaring ocean, and in the bellowing storm. Every grain of sand is a memento of his presence; every spire of grass points to his abode; every fluttering leaf waves him reverence. There is not a particle of matter in the broad earth, from the crude clay lump that sleeps in its bosom, to moving, breathing, thinking man, who rules its surface, but

——"Shows the labor of his hands
Or impress of his feet."

"The heavens declare his glory, and the firmament showeth forth his handy work." Every star reflects his brightness; every constellation spells his name. The clouds are his chariot, and he rides upon the wings of the wind. There is not a change in the seasons, nor an event of providence; there is not an object that addresses the smell, or taste, or touch; there is not a vision that passes before the eye, nor a sound that salutes the ear, but it tells of a God—a God of unbounded wisdom, goodness, and love. Our God, our Father, our Saviour, our Friend. Sensible of our constant dependence on him, let us pray without ceasing. Grateful for blessings received at his hands, let us in everything give thanks. Confiding in him implicitly for future mercies, let us rejoice evermore; yea,

"To Him whose temple is all space,
Whose altar, earth, sea, skies,
One chorus let all beings raise,
All nature's incense rise."

Let us serve him faithfully in this distant province of his dominion, where he is seen, after all, but "through a glass darkly," and soon he will permit us to surround his throne, and bask in the smiles of his countenance, without a dimming veil between.

3. Finally, in view of this subject how pitiable the case of the infidel! How blind! Deity shining in everything around him, and yet he cannot see! How deaf! Everything that hath vocality speaking His name, and yet he cannot hear! Well do the Scriptures declare it is "the fool that hath said in his heart, There is no God." This blindness and deafness are willful. "They hold the truth in unrighteousness: because that which may be known of God is manifest among them, for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." How ungrateful is the infidel! He receives his all from the hand of God, and yet will not even acknowledge his existence, but gives the honor of all his blessings to another. How unhappy is the infidel! Everything around him is a mystery, himself a mystery—his origin, the object of his existence, his destiny, all involved in utter darkness. How low must be his esteem of himself and of his fellows! A slight difference of organic structure is all that distinguishes him from the reptile that crawls at his feet. Both live by chance, both die by chance; both have one end. How chilling his prospects of futurity! As age creeps on, or sickness wastes, he feels he is approaching—what? the shoreless, waveless, bottomless, gulf of annihilation. He feels that when he loses his life, he loses his all: when he thinks of the cold, damp grave, the loathsome decay, and the banqueting worm, there is no redeeming thought! no trust in a God! no gleam of immortality! no bright hope of a resurrection morn! no sweet foretaste of that auspicious hour when the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, shall come from heaven, and change this vile body, and fashion it according to his own glorious body, and when the redeemed of the Lord shall return to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads!

No! to the infidel the future is all dreary and dreadful. This world is his all of good, and yet he perceives it every moment receding. Death comprises the sum total of evil, and yet he sees it constantly approaching, and liable to pounce upon him in his securest moment. Yet dark and dreadful as appears the future to the infidel, the reality will infinitely exceed his imaginings. He calls death an eternal sleep, but he will find it a scene of wasting vigils, a scene of endless wakefulness and wailing. Life has been to him the period of sleep. Death alone has opened his eyes. Does he sometimes speak of death as a leap in the dark? It will, indeed, be an awful leap, from the precipice of infidelity into the dark abyss of perdition! That consciousness which he expected would leave him, clings strangely to him. That reason which he had resolved into a mere result of physical organization, or a property of matter, now asserts its prerogatives, and when it is too late to repent, teaches him the folly and sinfulness of his course, and the justice of his fearful doom. The existence of a God he no longer doubts, but shudders at the awful reality of that scripture which he once despised: "Though I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there!" With the dying Altamont he must say, as for a God, "Nothing less than an almighty Being could inflict what I now feel!" Is there any one infected with infidelity? Cast it away as you would cast coals of fire from your bosom: shun all books and associates that would bring you in contact with the poison. Their words are softer than oil, yet are they drawn swords. "He that believeth shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." Amen.

SERMON XXII.

The Reign of God a Source of Joy.

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"The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof."—Psalm xcvii, 1.

It has been remarked, that nowhere in the sacred writings is there an attempt formally to prove the existence of God. Their authors seem to have regarded this as a truth generally admitted, and in the abrupt manner of the Psalmist, they assert it, proclaiming, "The Lord reigneth;" declaring his awful majesty, his perfection in all his attributes, and calling on the people to worship him, to tremble in his presence, and to celebrate his praises. To the first of the human race God clearly manifested himself; and the frequent interviews the chief men among his peculiar people had with him, together with the tokens of his power and goodness so often given them, were sufficient to remind them constantly of his existence and preserving care. As the ruler of the universe, he has not left his works without a witness of himself, for thereon may be traced, in legible characters, in all parts of creation, the nature of his government. The light of reason in man has often been darkened; and, sunk in sin, superstition, and the abominations of idolatry, he has appeared as though deprived of all the noble and elevating characteristics given him by his Creator; yet, in but few instances, have communities of men been found so degraded as to have totally lost the idea of a Supreme Being.

Various are the modes which have been used to prove from nature the existence of God; to show that he reigns over the universe, possessing all the glorious attributes ascribed to him in the sacred Scriptures. These various modes of proof we do not purpose here to consider; but there is one way by which all can demonstrate for themselves that God exists, and that the Bible is true. Christ has assured us that "if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." If any man, then, will do the things written in the Bible, obey the injunctions, and follow the examples therein given, he shall know, shall have full and satisfactory proof, that God exists, and that the Scriptures are a revelation of his will. This mode of proof is the more valuable, since none have ever tried it and found it to fail. Those who have most fiercely assailed the Scriptures, and labored most zealously to overthrow their claim to a divine origin, have acknowledged, not only that they have not obeyed their dictates, but that they never candidly and carefully examined them, with a sincere desire for truth. Their wishes, vices, pursuits, or education, made them infidels, and, with opinions already formed, they read the word of God, only to cavil at its doctrines, and to refute its statements.

But while the existence of God is generally acknowledged, there are many who seem to deny the practical application of the great truth, "The Lord reigneth." We might infer from their statements, that they supposed that God created the world, and giving matter certain laws and tendencies, swung it forth into space, and left it to take care of itself; remaining himself a quiet spectator of the operations that have been going on since creation. There are many in the present age, of whom it may be said, they do not "like to retain God in their knowledge." Works on various branches of science are placed in the hands of the young, that exclude the agency of God from the operations and phenomena of nature, ascribing all things to secondary causes. They abound in errors and inconsistencies. They represent matter as inert, completely passive, wanting power; and yet ascribing to it certain laws and tendencies, they make it the source of a mighty, incomprehensible power, whose influence reaches through the illimitable extent of space, which not only produces the changes in organic and inorganic bodies around us, but binds the planets to their orbits, determines the relations of systems of worlds to each other, and regulates the harmony and forces of the whole material universe. They assure those who may seek to know the nature and operation of these "laws" and "tendencies," that here is a limit to human knowledge, that beyond them we cannot go. But is it not absurd to call a law the cause of anything? It is something conceived in the mind of a rational being; the term denotes a mode of existence or an order of sequence. It has a real and independent existence, as it must have to be a cause. "It is a perversion of language to call a law the cause of anything." When it has reference to any effect or change, it implies an agent, a power entirely distinct from itself; and aside from this agent, it can do nothing; is nothing. It would be absurd to consider civil laws the cause of the peace and prosperity of society, without reference to the power that formed and enforces them. All the statute books in the land would oppose but a small obstacle to the robber, the murderer, and the betrayer of unsuspecting innocence, did they not know that laws are but the rule by which, in the infliction of punishment for their crimes, a power will be exerted, which nothing human can successfully resist. They fear not the law, but the power that enforces it. In nature there is a continual change; everywhere we behold unconscious particles of matter taking their several stations, and arranging themselves in order, in plants and animals, where the least mistake would destroy the whole: we see a perfect adaptation of everything to its use and place, and in the various complicated motions around us, a harmony and a simplicity that cannot be improved. And shall we ascribe all these wonderful results to laws and tendencies, to "election of affinities," or any modification of attraction? Shall we not rather remember that "the Lord reigneth;" that he not only created, but that he upholds, the universe, and is constantly exerting his power for the good of his creatures? The course of nature is but the manifestation of the power of God, and natural laws, instead of being causes, show merely that he acts uniformly, and that when we have once noticed a result we may again expect it in similar circumstances. The agency of God is manifested in all the phenomena of nature. The apparent influence of the varying seasons that beautify or desolate the ground, of genial sunshine, of storms and tempests, all result from the exercise of his power.

> ——" The poor Indian, whose untutor'd mind
> Sees God in clouds, and hears him in the wind,"

may be far wiser relative to the cause that produces them, than many skilled in worldly wisdom. That system of education or religion that stops at secondary causes, has overlooked what should ever be its great object, to lead its votaries "through nature up to nature's God." There is not a single plant that pleases by its fragrance or charms with its beauty, the growth of which was not caused by a direct exertion of his power: and every change in nature, in organized and in inorganic bodies, that is not caused by some created being, must be ascribed to this same great First Cause. Thus we should learn to trace the power and the presence of God in all around us; in the fall of a pebble, and in the rapid motion of the planet in its orbit; in the murmuring zephyr, and in the desolating tempest; in the meandering rivulet, and in the foaming, thundering cataract. "The Lord reigneth;" he is not far removed, but is constantly exerting his power about us.

But there is a duty enjoined by the Psalmist: "Let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof." This injunction may be considered as addressed to the intelligent and likewise the unintelligent part of creation. The latter does rejoice in the goodness of its Creator; for wherever we go we find indications of happiness. They may be heard in the notes of the merry songsters of the wood; they may be seen in the earth, the air, and the water. The varying motions of the myriads that float in a sunbeam, the activity and playfulness of the inhabitants of the waters, all indicate joy under the reign of God. Even those parts of unintelligent creation, which, being placed more immediately under the control of man, yield submissively to his commands, perform the labor he requires, and spend their strength in his service, victims often of his caprice and cruelty, still seem to rejoice in the goodness of their Creator, and to find life a blessing. Man alone partakes not of the general joy. On account of his folly earth was cursed, and as a consequence of his sins misery and evil overspread the world, yet he alone repines under the reign of God. How strikingly the course of nature tells that it was formed for a happier state! It has no sympathy with human wo, and corresponds not to man's uncertain, changing condition. The joyous aspect of nature seems to mock him who, oppressed by anguish and care, goes forth to wander in her solitudes. Flowers bloom as fair, their fragrance is as sweet around the couch of the dying as at the festive board. The sun shines as brightly when sadness overspreads the land, when a nation's champion, or the man whose virtuous deeds have endeared him to his countrymen, is expiring, as when that nation assembles to celebrate the jubilee of its independence and the illustrious deeds of its heroes. Its glories are as bright, the face of nature is as gay, around the doomed city where pestilence rages and destruction wastes, mocking the skill of man, as around the most favored people on earth. Earth has, indeed, been cursed; cursed with the curse of God. Storms and revolutions sweep over its surface, but when the tempest has past, nature still seems to smile even amid her ruins. He who can go forth when all is quiet; when the destroying agents are still, and man's stormy passions are hushed; and contemplate the face of nature, and see no indications that it was formed for a happier state, no remains of its former beauty and loveliness that have survived even the curse of its Creator, has not yet rightly studied her works, nor read "that elder scripture writ by God's own hand." Thus do the unintelligent and inanimate parts of creation rejoice under the reign of God. Man alone is found repining. He goes forth amid the ruin and misery his folly has caused, and murmurs that in common with other parts of creation he must suffer. He finds some part of earth that does not seem adapted to his use; a marsh or a desert oppose his designs; he meets with a poisonous flower, or a reptile stings him, and forthwith he derides the wisdom of that Being that thus ordered nature. He seems to think that he alone should engross Heaven's care; that all things should be suited to his convenience and fitted for his use. He forgets that, with all his boasted powers, he constitutes but an insignificant portion of God's works; that on this earth myriads of beings derived life from the same Hand that bestowed it on him, and share in the goodness and protecting care of the same superintending Providence. Man disobeys all the natural and moral laws of his being, "drops on headlong appetite the slackened rein," and plunges into all the excesses of intemperance and vice; he perverts angel talents, forms engines of destruction, and, like a destroying spirit, he goes forth on the battle-field, and renders earth one scene of carnage and ruin. But when the natural results of his conduct appear; when his own system is attacked by pain and disease; when anarchy prevails in society, destroying its peace and harmony, overthrowing the most time-honored and beneficial institutions, and upturning the very foundations of the social fabric, then, instead of humbling himself under a sense of his folly, he repines at the government of the universe: with bold, brazen front, charging on Him the evils he is called to suffer, he curses his God, and dies. We meet no stronger proof of man's degradation and depravity, than his insensibility in relation to his sin and the mercy of God. The ancients considered unthankfulness for favors received a crime worthy of punishment. If ingratitude toward men merits so severe condemnation, how much greater the offense when manifested toward God! While all around him rejoice under the reign of God, why does man, most highly exalted and favored in this part of creation, alone endowed with reason, and made capable of understanding the works and designs of his Creator, alone murmur, obstinately pervert the talents and privileges given him? Many are the reasons why man should especially rejoice.

1. The fact that we have a Ruler of so exalted a character, possessing such glorious attributes, is itself a source of joy. He is a being of infinite goodness and wisdom, and whatever he designs he has power to perform. Perfect in himself, and independent of all created existences, he has exerted all his attributes for the good of his creatures. It is evidently a source of joy to any people if they have wise and good rulers, interested in their welfare, willing and able to devise and to execute all plans and operations that the best good of their subjects may require. In these respects, all other rulers fall infinitely below God, who is the source of all perfection, the giver of every good gift, "whose tender mercies are over all his works." He might have formed us so ill-adapted to the world around us, that existence would be a curse. He might have made our senses so unsuited to the external world, that every breath would cause us pain; that every object of sight should produce loathing; every sound should be a harsh, grating discord; and that every object of touch should produce the most extreme agony. How different from this is our condition! Where sin has not marred and disturbed the order and harmony of nature, we find everything designed most carefully for the happiness of all created beings. No one has been able to devise the least improvement, whereby greater happiness could be secured in the relations and adaptations of animate beings to the world around them. This great Ruler has not only created, but he constantly preserves, all his subjects; "in him they live, and move, and have their being;" and at no time are they unnoticed by him. He manifests his love for them in the most endearing manner, representing himself as a Father, and as more willing to give them good gifts than earthly parents are to give them to their children. His power is exerted for their defense; "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them;" and "the Lord is a shield, a fortress, a sure defense to those that seek him."

2. We should rejoice under the reign of God as a legislator. All his laws are just and perfect, made with an exact adaptation to his works and the wants of his subjects. These laws he has published, and given with them full evidence of their authority. They are plain, simple, and easily understood; the most ignorant can from them understand what is good, and what the Lord requireth of him. They are so perfectly calculated to secure the happiness of those to whom they are given, that no one, however he may have rebelled against the divine government, has been able to show that the happiness of man would be promoted by the abrogation of any one of its requirements.

We should, moreover, rejoice that these laws are suitably enforced by the great Lawgiver himself, with proper sanctions. He is no respecter of persons; the high and the low, the rich and the poor, come before him, and are judged by the same stern, unvarying rules of justice.

> "In the corrupted currents of this world
> Offense's gilded hand may shove by justice,
> And oft 'tis seen, the wicked prize itself,
> Buys out the law; but 'tis not so above."

Often judges, and the executors of human laws, when they desire to do right, and to render strict and impartial justice, err from not understanding all the evidence applicable to the case, as they are led astray by artful and designing counselors. But God knows all hearts, he seeks not advice from any; and no wiles of crafty, interested men, no sophistry, can clear the guilty, when judged by him, or subject the innocent to punishment. The sanctions, by which his laws are enforced, are such as become so great a ruler, distinguished by such glorious, infinite attributes. The rewards he gives to the obedient comprehend all that is really desirable; the glory of them, it has not entered into the heart of man to conceive. He has prepared for such a fruition of happiness far above their present conceptions. They will be delivered from all care, sorrow, and pain, and be admitted to the society of angels, the spirits of just men made perfect, and of Christ the Saviour and God the Father. He has denounced the most fearful penalties against those who violate his laws. They will be condemned to endure the wrath of God, the anguish and remorse of a guilty conscience, to live in unquenchable fire, and spend an eternity in the society of malignant demons. We should rejoice that the Lord reigneth as a legislator, as a ruler, whose laws are just and good, one whose government is maintained with power that none can overthrow.

3. But we should still more rejoice, that hitherto the Lord has reigned, and still reigns, on a throne of grace and mercy. Man is in a state of rebellion; constituting but a feeble and insignificant part of God's works, having no power in himself independently to do anything, he has, nevertheless, dared to pervert the being and power given him, to raise his puny arm in defiance of the Ruler of the universe. Considering all that he had done for this part of his dominions, the blessings and peculiar privileges he had given it, the reasonableness of his government, and the inexcusableness of this rebellion, what could any intelligent being have expected but that swift and fearful punishment would have been inflicted on the rebels, corresponding to the enormity of their offense? From man he had nothing to fear, with him he need make no compromise; for should the whole universe revolt, his throne would remain unshaken; at one word of his power, all would disappear, and God again would exist alone. What could have been more naturally expected, than that he would have converted this world into one vast prison-house of torment, where rebellious man would for ever suffer the just penalty of his crimes, or that he would strike earth from existence, extinguish the light that here shines, and suffer darkness to regain her old dominion? Yet how different was the course pursued by this great Ruler! We have already spoken of the goodness of God in creation; but his goodness in redemption far exceeds this, and is a stronger reason why we should rejoice that "the Lord reigneth." When man was exposed to the wrath of God, able to offer no satisfaction for his violation of the divine law, when there was no created arm that could save him from impending ruin, God gave his only-begotten Son, that, through his sufferings and death, man might gain eternal life. He, against whom man had sinned, whose laws he had violated, whose goodness he had despised, came forth to mediate between him and justice, paid the great debt, redeemed

him from the curse of the law, and opened a new and living way through which he might gain the favor of God and the joys of immortality. The hosts of heaven, doubtless, beheld with astonishment the presumption and folly of man, and remained in expectation of some fearful manifestation of divine justice; but when the wondrous goodness of God in redemption was made known to them, a shout of joy arose from myriads of angels, while they tuned their harps, and sang a new song of praise and adoration to their common God, and proclaimed peace on earth and good-will to men. But the "earth should rejoice, and the multitude of isles should be glad," not only that God on his throne of grace devised and offered salvation to men, but also that he still exercises loving-kindness and forbearance to those that continue rebellious and ungrateful. Christ, from his mediatorial throne, has commissioned his servants to go forth and proclaim life and salvation to all who believe on him, and to beseech all, in his stead, to be reconciled to God. He endeavors to win them to himself, likewise, by the various means of grace he has established, by the teachings of providence, and the strivings of his Holy Spirit. The gospel has been proclaimed, setting forth man's sin, his exposure to ruin eternal, his only way of escape, and the wonderful condescension and compassion of God manifested to him; yet how few regard it! With indifference sinners hear the story of a Saviour's love, the danger, the ruin, that threaten them. Amid the entreaties of God's ambassadors, the intercessions of saints, the songs of the redeemed, the offer of the glories of heaven, in view of the terrors of hell, disregarding all manifestations of God's favor, they still greedily pursue the pleasures of sin, and rush on in the broad road to death. Toward such the mercy of God is extended; year after year he spares them, he calls after, and, with the tenderness of a father, he entreats them to look unto him and be saved.

While, then, we may exclaim, "Wonder, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth!" at man's ingratitude and sin; we have reason to rejoice that the Lord reigneth on a throne of grace and mercy.

4. But we should also rejoice that the Lord will soon reign on a throne of universal justice and judgment. The time is coming, when "the Lord shall judge the people

righteously. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein; then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord; for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth." Psalm xcvi, 10–13. The true character of God's government is not now fully displayed; its equity is not apparent. The wicked may be seen triumphant; when we look for judgment we behold oppression. There are cruelties and wrongs innumerable in society, monstrous atrocities that are perpetrated by the strong on the weak. The righteous often are tormented, persecuted, and by thousands put to death with cruel tortures; while "the wicked become old and are mighty in power." Considering all these things, one might be led to exclaim, "Is there no reward for the righteous? Is there no punishment for the workers of iniquity? Is there no God that judgeth in the earth?" "Clouds and darkness are now indeed around him," yet shall it be seen that "righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." In that great day when he shall sit on his throne of judgment, "when his lightnings shall enlighten the world, the earth see and tremble, the hills be melted like wax in his presence, then shall the heavens declare his righteousness and all the people see his glory." Then will the Lord explain all the mystery now enshrouding his dealings with men, and show clearly the justice and goodness of his government. Then shall we understand why the condition of men is permitted here to be so unequal—

"Why unassuming worth in secret lived,
And died neglected; why the good man's share
In life was gall and bitterness of soul;
——why heaven-born truth
And moderation fair, wore the red marks
Of superstition's scourge; why licensed pain,
That cruel spoiler, that imbosom'd foe,
Imbitter'd all our bliss."

Then, judging every man according to his works, he will reward the righteous and punish the wicked, and all parts of his dominions will have new reasons to rejoice that the Lord reigneth.

5. The assurance that the Lord reigneth is a source of great consolation to those that trust in him. The human mind, dissatisfied with the objects of the present life, is continually seeking after something infinite and permanent, in which it may with unwavering confidence trust. There is nothing below the sun, we know full well, on which we can rely with safety. All things earthly are mutable and transitory. We behold our fellow-beings coming on this stage of action, acting their several parts in the drama of life, and then passing away. Of the millions that have lived in ages past, no one survives, and few are the records that remain to tell for what they lived. The same current that has swept all away, is irresistibly bearing us onward, while a thick veil hides from our view that future state into which we soon shall be ushered. But when clouds of darkness and uncertainty gather around us, how cheering is the assurance, "The Lord reigneth,"—the throne of the Eternal stands secure, where the mutations of time reach not, and its revolutions do not disturb! There is a touching and beautiful incident related of a sailor-boy who accompanied his father on the treacherous ocean. During their voyage a fearful tempest arose, and the dangers that threatened them caused the countenance of the hardy mariner to turn pale, and brought dismay and consternation to the stoutest heart. But amid all the distraction, the turmoil, and terrible perils of the scene, this youth was seen, undisturbed, gazing calmly and with a look of confidence on him to whom the guidance of the vessel in that awful hour had been committed. When reminded of his danger, and asked if he did not fear—"Fear! No," he replied; "my father is at the helm." What an instance is this of childish confidence and trust! The raging of the elements, the roaring of the tempest, the heaving and groaning of the shattered vessel, brought no terrors to him. His father was at the helm. Confident of his kindness and affection, ignorant of the weakness of trusting to human power, he could not believe that his father would suffer harm to approach him. We are on the stormy sea of life; shoals, quicksands, and ten thousand dangers, lie around us on every side. Storms and tempests assail us, and often death appears with all his terrors. The sun of prosperity may indeed for awhile shine with cheering radiance, and

hope may joyously spread her sails to the propitious breeze; but anon the dark clouds of adversity gather around us, our sky is obscured, and our frail bark is tossed on the billows of affliction. Christian, does thy heart fail thee? art thou ready to yield in despair? Reflect! thy Father is at the helm—the Lord reigneth. He rides on the whirlwind, and directs the storm. The winds and tempests are in his hand, and the afflictions of life are at his disposal. O, when will man learn to trust implicitly, with childlike confidence, in his God? We must expect to meet in this life with trials and afflictions, and it may be kindly ordered thus. Our affections are too much attached to this world; pleased with vanities, we are prone to forget our duty and our destiny. Adversity sunders the ties that bind us to this world, teaches us the frailty and vanity of all earthly things, and leads us to rely on Him who alone is unchangeable. There are many who have had reason to rejoice that they have been afflicted, and have been led to say:—

"Father, I bless thy gentle hand;
How kind thy chast'ning rod,
That forced my conscience to a stand,
And brought my wand'ring soul to God!
Foolish, and impotent, and blind,
Ere I had felt thy judgments, Lord,
I lost my guide, I left my way,
But now I love and keep thy word."

Has disappointment marked you for its victim? Have you seen your prospects, one after another, fail, your sources of enjoyment disappear, and have those who commenced life's journey with you passed like a dream away, leaving you to pursue your dreary course alone? Have you been called to pass through the deep waters of affliction? O, repine not; the Lord reigneth, and will do all things well. He will so order events, that, if you are faithful to him, these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall work out for you a more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,—

"Whate'er thy lot, whoe'er thou be,
Confess thy folly, kiss the rod,
And in thy chast'ning sorrows see
The hand of God.

"A bruised reed he will not break,
Afflictions all his children feel;
He wounds them for his mercy's sake,
He wounds to heal."

Thus should we, whether in prosperity or adversity, rejoice that the Lord reigneth.

And ye who have rebelled against him, and have hitherto refused his offers of mercy, consider well your case and condition. You can now resist the strivings of his Spirit, refuse all his calls of mercy; but have you an arm of power to contend with God, when he shall come to judge the world in righteousness? "The Lord reigneth; let sinners tremble." Now is the hour of mercy, when from his throne of grace he offers terms of reconciliation. Haste, then, O sinner! now be wise and submit while pardon may be found, and his favor gained. Be assured his kingdom must prevail; before him every knee shall bow. While the sword of justice is suspended, listen, ye that are unreconciled to him, to the calls of a God and the entreaties of a Saviour, that you may join in the general joy at his government. Then may your voices mingle with "the voice of that great multitude which shall be as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

SERMON XXIII.

Conscience, as an Instrument of Punishment.

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"And thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed, and say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me! I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly."—Prov. v, 11–14.

THESE are the words, and this the condition, of a young man, whose dissolute life had induced disease, and want, and infamy. Standing now upon the further limit of time, about to descend to a premature grave, he spends the last moments of his inglorious life in retrospections upon his course of conduct. He had spurned the counsels of the wise, and contemned the admonitions of the prudent; he had repudiated the marriage covenant, and broken away from the restraints of virtuous society, till even conscience

> "—seem'd, nodding o'er her charge, to drop
> On headlong appetite the slacken'd rein,
> And give him up to license unrecall'd,
> Unmark'd."

But his career of folly is at length checked by the virulence of disease. He now feels under an arrest by the hand of insulted justice, and his wasted form lingers for a time upon the confines of the boundless future, while conscience awakes, like the meteor's glare, to reveal the horrors of his condition. He stands out upon the dim verge of life, a beacon light to all who live without God. His reputation is blasted; "his honor he had given to another;" his wealth had been foolishly lavished upon "the stranger;" his health ruined by his excesses, and his years cut off by dissipation: but that which added poignancy to his distress was the *moral* aspect of his life. Remorse, like a fierce vulture, had clutched upon his soul, and despair had cast the shadows of a cheerless night around him. It was not that life was so short; that wealth and fame had irrecoverably fled; that dire pains racked his body, and disease drank up his spirits, that he chiefly lamented. These were not of themselves insupportable. But while the wrecks of all that was perishable lay strewn in his path, and the light of hope was now fading for ever from his eye; his soul, "still powerful to reason, full mighty to suffer," uttered its deep lamentations in the reproachful words, "How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me!" It was from his moral reflections that his keenest anguish arose. It was sin that armed death with its more than mortal sting. Here let us pause, and from this sad history draw forth the admonitions of wisdom.

The theme which will receive our attention in the following discourse, is, *conscience, as an instrument of moral punishment.*

I say *moral*, to distinguish it from *civil* or *corporeal* punishment. It is not the province of man to punish immoralities *as such*. Human laws take cognizance only of the overt act, and their penalties have relation to man in the complex relations of civil life. Impure motives are not cognizable by civil law, and cannot be appropriately punished by the magistrate. It is in the moral nature alone that vice, as such, can meet its just awards. Here must be the seat of that suffering due to moral offense. This is beyond the province of man, or any finite power, to arbitrate. Omniscience alone can adjudge, and conscience execute, a strictly moral punishment.

In discoursing upon this subject, we shall observe,

I. THE NATURAL AUTHORITY OF CONSCIENCE, AND ITS CONSEQUENT POWER TO INFLICT PUNISHMENT.

II. THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF ITS PUNITIVE ACTION.

I. *The natural authority of conscience, and its consequent power of punishment.*

1. If we would appreciate the capacity of the soul to suffer through the morbid action of the moral feelings, we must first understand its internal structure, its several faculties and powers; or, if the phrase suit better, its various states and affections; and the relation of conscience to the whole.

Man is endowed with various powers of reason, of sensibility, and of action. Of the principles of action, some are mechanical, as instinct and habit; some are animal, as the appetites and some of the desires and affections; and others rational, arising from a knowledge of his relations to other beings, and from a foresight of the proper consequences of his acts. He thus combines in his nature those laws which govern the brute creation, with those which declare him to be made in the "image of God," and suit him to a state of moral discipline. With this complex nature he is endowed with the power of self-government, which implies the due exercise of all the properties of his being, under the direction and control of one supreme authority. This authority is conscience, which God has enthroned in the human breast with all the attributes of sovereignty. By this faculty, as an intellectual principle, man judges of the relation his conduct bears to the rule of duty, and of its tendencies in the moral system; as a motive principle, it enforces right conduct upon grounds the most rational, by feelings the most sacred and urgent.

The brute animal rushes on to the gratification of its desires without a thought beyond the immediate object of pursuit, and with no higher law to govern it than the present impulse of appetite. Not so with man. He brings under his eye the just relations of universal being—lifts the curtain of futurity, and traces the operation of causes to their ultimate effects—and what, upon the wide scale of existence, and in the flow of infinite duration, is promotive of the chief good, he chooses and pursues. This is the graduating scale of the moral law; this the governing law of man's nature; he is capable of this, was made to act thus, and cannot be said to act naturally, or agreeably to the full powers of his being, if he act otherwise. His highest nature can be developed in no other way. He has appetites and desires like the brute, which seek their appropriate objects, and furnish a strong inducement to live for present gratification; but he has also a nobler endowment—a higher ground, and a safer rule of action—and a more sublime and enduring susceptibility of enjoyment. In the present gratification of desire he may, indeed, fulfill an inferior law of his nature—he may be consistent with himself, considered merely as possessing an animal constitution; but the case may be such as to impinge a higher law—the sovereign law of conscience. He may be a consistent *animal*, but a perverse *man*.

2. But consider what a monitor conscience is. It teaches us to perform in good faith, as being right, that which we do; but it does not of itself supply an independent rule of right. If the particular rule of action should be defective, it is not the office of conscience, in its direct operations, to correct it. It avails itself of the best aids of the understanding, and enjoins upon its possessor to act upon a conviction of right, according to the best information within his reach. The apostle informs us that the heathen world are governed by conscience; and though their rule of duty, by which conscience operates, is not written in alphabetical characters, it is, nevertheless, graven "on the heart;" it is in part the law of the constitution of all so-

cial beings, and in part supplied by tradition and the simpler deductions of reason.

3. The government of conscience is not like that of the animal appetites. Instance our desire for animal food. It is at first a gentle monition ; but neglected, it rises by degrees till its painful effects are felt throughout the system, the mind is drawn off from the pursuits of business and pleasure, and we are compelled to seek its gratification. Not so with conscience. Its voice is gentle and persuasive, often drowned in the clamor of passion, or unheeded in the eager pursuit of forbidden pleasure. But, however inadequate may be its practical power to govern in a given case, its rightful sovereignty is undisputed and eternal.

4. But if conscience is supreme, according to the original constitution of our nature, then, whatever may be the occasional, temporary abuse it may receive from the usurpation of the animal propensities, it must, upon the whole, and taking all the range of our existence into the account, possess an ascendent power over man.

However impotent the moral feelings may seem in the generality of men in the present state of existence, no argument can be drawn from this fact to disparage the real efficiency of conscience as the directive and executive principle of the soul. The present is a state of probation, and this single fact involves the possibility of an abuse of those powers, in the right cultivation of which consists the highest perfection of our nature. But man is under moral government, by the remedial and executive operations of which he will ultimately be placed in circumstances wherein all the constitutional powers of the mind will have their legitimate scope of action.

It cannot be that those principles of our nature which constitute the crowning glory of man, and which, by the very charter of our being, are constituted supreme, should always be subjected to the inferior powers. In the progress of our being, and the development of the wise purposes of Heaven, they must, sooner or later, be called forth, if not to answer the end for which they were at first bestowed, still, to furnish the abuses they have received. And this power to furnish will be great in proportion to their relative importance in the social economy. The very notion of supreme authority, in a well-organized government, implies the control of all those means necessary to enforce law upon the unwilling. So with conscience. All the powerful springs of mental action and of sensibility are under its command, and will one day yield a ready compliance with the mandates of their rightful sovereign. The intellectual powers are its faithful allies—judgment is its unbribed counsel, and memory its recording scribe. Hope, fear, desire, with those emotions of regret or gladness that arise from retrospection, are more influenced by conscience than by any other faculty.

5. But it is not from the deductions of reason only that we arrive at an estimate of the punitive power of conscience. Go where you will; turn over the pages of this world's history; and the natural dread of an accusing conscience will be found to have been the rod of terror to the guilty in all ages. No man will long abide the direct action of self-reproach. If he accept not relief in repentance and forgiveness, he will seek refuge elsewhere from the inner pangs of remorse. Some special plea of extenuation will be entered; some lower and more lenient rule of duty sought out; some element of belief, calculated to modify, or perhaps neutralize, the action of truth upon the mind, adopted; some noble act performed to atone for the sin; or some remaining trait of remaining excellence advanced to a front view to hide the deformity of character and beguile the eye of reason; some expedient to calm the perturbed motions within; or, should these fail, the wretched man, scourged as with the sting of scorpions, stubbornly resists the truth, abandons duty, and blindly rushes on to a darker ruin.

The restlessness of the soul, under the action of self-reproach, has displayed itself upon a wide scale in the cumbrous and often sanguinary superstitions of the heathen. A sense of moral turpitude, and a consequent fear of divine punishment, have urged men in all ages to adopt some measures to avert the wrath and propitiate the favor of Deity. The sacrificial rites of the heathen were mostly deprecatory, and stand as the unerring index of a mind oppressed with guilt, and laboring darkly to solve the problem, "How shall a man be just with God?"

We have seen the distress and anguish which a sense of guilt produces in the breast of the awakened sinner: we have seen him when sleep had departed from his eyes, and he forgot to take his meat; when he had left the halls of mirth and gayety, and had wrapped himself in sackcloth, and bound his heart in grief; we have heard the deep groan break on the stillness of the night, as he smote upon his breast and sent up a cry for mercy; we have seen the inebriate renounce his cups, the man of pleasure forsake his sensualities, the covetous "let go his eager grasp on gold," and the worldly great bow meekly at the cross;—we have witnessed the ready relinquishment of earth's highest favor, for the boon of inward peace. Still, these are but faint monitions of that amazing power, which, though it slumber now, will ere long awake, at the summons of that "Heaven-commissioned hour" which ushers in the solemn pomp of eternity. But let us turn our inquiries more directly to

II. *The nature and extent of the punitive action of conscience.*

The sufferings occasioned by a guilty conscience are the result of moral reflections upon a course of sin, and a consciousness of a present state unsuited to the great moral ends of existence. These reflections and this consciousness are, by a mysterious law of our nature, attended with lively emotions of peculiar distress. Let us contemplate the effects of sin upon our relations to God, to holy beings, and upon our own moral constitution. In relation to God, a consciousness of guilt is accompanied,

1. With a sense of the loss of divine favor and fellowship. The happiness which one intelligent being derives from society with another, results from a reciprocity of kindred sentiment and feeling. A similarity of constitutional properties creates a natural ground of sympathy as the basis of interchange, and the perfection of social happiness implies that each enters freely and fully into the mental states and exercises of the other. This being the case, the happiness of each will be proportioned to the moral and intellectual elevation of the other. Pure moral sympathy marks the highest grade of enjoyment of which an intelligent being is capable.

But it is not in communion with the finite mind that the immortal sympathies of our nature can meet their highest susceptibility of enjoyment. The power of indefinite expansion points the soul to a more exalted destiny. Those ceaseless yearnings after knowledge and happiness which are ever widening and freshening, and come welling up from the hidden depths of its existence, were never intended to terminate on the creature. The soul was made for God. It bears his image, and was fitted to bask in the smiles of his love. If an exact agreement between two finite minds produces happiness, their union with the Infinite is transcendently more beatifying. In his favor we live—desire is satiated; cut off from God we perish, like the withered branch severed from the parent tree. Our happiness is graduated by a scale of approximation to the divine character. Godliness is the sum of our duty and the summit of our bliss. The moral essence of heaven is comprised in the words, "*We shall be like Him.*" Holiness and happiness stand related to each other as cause and effect. It is by the constitution of the human mind that our highest perfection and happiness result from a consciousness that our mental states and exercises are in exact sympathy with those of the divine Mind.

But sin disturbs this harmony, severs the bond of this spiritual union, alienates the creature from the Creator, and perverts all the moral tastes and relishes of the soul. A sense of being at enmity with the highest moral excellence in the universe degrades the mind from its native dignity, and sinks it to a condition of wretchedness which can be measured only by a rule of inversion to the moral altitude from which it has fallen. Just as important as the highest moral purity is to the happiness of the soul, just so wretched, inversely, will be the soul under a moral consciousness of hostility to that goodness.

Pause, then, thoughtless man, and consider what it is to possess a nature unlike to God! Think what thou wilt do when all thy earthly dependences are cut off; when

> "—mold'ring earthward, 'reft of every trust,"

thy "dust shall return to the earth as it was, and thy spirit to the God who gave it." Think what existence will be to thee when all that is lovely and beatifying in the infinite Mind shall be withheld from thee, and thou, exiled from the abodes of the blessed, shalt be doomed to feel the pain of an unalleviated want—

"To writhe, to toss, to pant beneath thy load,
And bear the weight of an offended God."

2. A sense of guilt is accompanied with an apprehension of punishment. In the breast of every man there exists a belief that this world is under a providential government, from the just awards of which he has something to hope or to fear in a future state of being. True, this belief exists in various degrees; is not always a practical principle with men; is often found during the most of one's life in a latent, or dormant state; yet, there it is, the same veritable, almost instinctive belief—a belief which no speculative sophistry nor life of dissipation can efface—and needs only a suitable occasion to call it forth. Often has conscience, after a long period of inactivity occasioned by abuse—

"——while she seem'd to sleep
On rose and myrtle, lull'd with syren song—"

suddenly started "from her cavern in the soul's abyss," as if invigorated by repose, and, summoning all the powers of the soul to her aid, executed her vindictive office with resistless energy. Particularly has this power discovered itself where the offender has been unexpectedly brought into danger. At such times he feels his dependence upon a retributive Power from whom there is now no avenue of escape. He shrinks from the prospect of meeting an insulted God, and sends up a plea for mercy. It is not the imbecility of a perishable nature that yields the external cry; it is the return of conscience to her rightful dominion—though a return, alas! which is often too late to recover the ruined soul from the anarchy of sin and the wretchedness of despair.

In the history of Joseph's brethren we have an illustration of this peculiar power of conscience. Twenty-one years had elapsed since they had wickedly conspired against their brother, and the matter had slumbered in undisturbed concealment. But no sooner were they arrested as spies, and brought into imminent peril, than conscience, by an eternal law of our moral nature, awoke, and began the fearful work of retrospection. Their inhumanity to Joseph first meets their eye; the lips of confession are unsealed: "And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." How different the office of conscience in the breast of a holy man, in the hour of adversity! To him afflictions serve to settle more securely the well-grounded trust, and render more pure and consoling the perspective visions of hope. But the holy guards of faith and hope are withdrawn when innocence has fallen, and suspicion and distrust—

> " —the dim-eyed heralds of dismay—"

look out upon the darkened future, while fear spreads an alarm through all the revolted empire of the soul.

How oft has the rustle of a leaf, the hasty footstep, the smothered whisper, the stranger's look, startled the assassin, brought the images of death before his terrified imagination, and awakened emotions that have betrayed to the world the midnight secret of his heart. "The wicked flee when no man pursueth." His irregularity, indecision, and embarrassment, in all his movements, at length leak out the fearful workings of an accusing conscience, and lay a train of circumstances by which the messengers of justice are put upon the track. Guilt places the offender in a new relation to law, brings him under the dominion of passions which constantly exert a disturbing power upon his reason, lends to each aspect of things an unnatural hue, and plants the serpent in his path by day, and the thorn in his pillow by night.

Nor let it be supposed that it is the civil arm alone of which men stand in awe—though this itself is one of the appointed means of Heaven for punishing sin—nor yet cases of great overt criminality, by which conscience is aroused to execute its penal function. It is the *spirituality* of the law that lends to offense its peculiar turpitude, and points the envenomed shafts of self-reproach, and agitates the fears. It is the inward belief that there is a God of judgment, from whose vigilance there is no escape, that gives reality to the fearful apprehensions of the guilty.

But it is not in this life that conscience exerts its greatest retributive power. Here the complexity of man's condition opens to him resources of enjoyment in which his highest nature cannot participate. Here the sinner lives a life of sense. He feeds on the vanities of the world, and wraps himself in its attractive drapery, and pursues the false glitter of its honor, and lulls his fears to repose upon the lap of its seductive pleasures. But such, to one like him, verging on to an unseen eternity, is an unreal, because an unnatural, life. The flush of worldly prosperity is but the hectic of an inward fatal disease—the calm of conscience but the deadly portent of a gathering storm—

> "The torrent's smoothness, ere it dash below."

How oft, at the sudden approach of death, have the smothered fires of conscience burst forth to shed a momentary gleam upon the surrounding darkness—

> "As ocean-wrecks illuminate the storm;"

and ah! when the hopeless soul awoke to see its danger, no help was near. It had passed the last light-house of mercy, spurned the pilotage of truth, and was now drifting upon the rocks of despair.

> "So bad a death argues a monstrous life."

Alas! how are the wicked "brought into desolation as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors." Yea, "it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God."

In relation to other moral beings, a sense of guilt is accompanied with

1. A loss of the confidence and esteem of the holy. The desire of esteem is a part of our mental constitution, and an original spring of action in man. Its great power in molding the character and governing the life indicates to what extent our happiness is made to depend upon its right cultivation. The desire of society is not more potent in its practical influence than the desire to be trusted, and respected, and beloved, by those with whom our social being is blended. Every man feels that society is pleasant and desirable in proportion as he is respected and beloved; is irksome where his presence awakens no emotions but those of aversion and contempt. To act nobly and praiseworthily—to perform some deed whereby the gratitude, the admiration, the esteem and confidence of others shall

be secured—is that for which each child of Adam daily longs. Point to him the road to honor—place before him an object of real merit and moment—"and the merest day-drudge kindles into a hero." It is hence men labor for posthumous fame:

> "For this men write, speak, preach, and heroes kill,
> And bards burn what they call their midnight taper,
> To have, when the original is dust,
> A *name.*"

The abuses of this principle, in the pursuits of unsanctified ambition, furnish no evidence that it is not a part of our constitution, originally bestowed by the Creator for the well-being of man. We gain the concurrence of another's opinions and sympathies, and the sphere of our existence seems instantly enlarged. Already we maintain a sort of identity in that other mind. As the sphere of kindred minds widens, our individuality seems proportionately diffused, and our pleasure is commensurate to the extent and purity of this sympathetic oneness. Inversely is that man wretched who is cut off from these resources. We see hundreds living in the midst of society in a state of isolation and excitement, with none of the sweets of social life, corroded and imbittered with distrust and evil surmisings, and ill-will toward mankind, from the simple cause that they have failed to establish themselves in the confidence and respect of others. "Love is the bond of perfect union." Break this, and you dissolve the only element of social order and happiness. The dark purpose of the suicide is formed, not till the dread of dishonor and reproach overcomes the natural love of life and fear of death. Death itself is not so terrible to man as the doom,

> "To roam along the world's tired denizen,
> With none to bless him, none whom he can bless;
> None that, with kindred consciousness endued,
> If he were not, would seem to smile the less."

But sin disturbs the pure sympathy of moral beings, and ruptures the bond of their native union. Just in proportion as the mind is conscious of having violated moral obligation, is it conscious of an unfitness and incapacity to share and reciprocate the high moral sympathies of the holy. With these its peerage is now lost, and with the loss of honor follows a corresponding loss of happiness. Degraded from its native dignity; rejected from the fellowship of God, and disfranchised from the community of the pure in heart; the unhappy soul is now deprived of all extraneous sources of enjoyment. The sun of his happiness has gone down "behind the darkened west," the last star of hope has faded from the cheerless heavens, and shame draws the curtain of a solitary night about him.

> "The flowers and fruits of love are gone;
> The worm, the canker, and the grief,
> Are his alone."

But it is in the future state alone that these effects of sin can be fully realized. Here society is mixed. The good and the bad mingle together in various relations; honor and rank are not always graduated by moral character, nor measured by the same standard. Excluded from one rank, the individual finds his level in another, and feels a partial solace for the descent in the sympathies of those around him. Defeated on one ground, he rallies and endeavors to build himself up upon another. Not so in the invisible eternity to which we haste. There, society is divided into two great classes—the *holy* and the *unholy.* No other separating line is drawn. There, the native aptitudes and powers of the soul discover themselves, and a correspondence of moral character will be the principle of association and the only basis of sympathy. There conscience maintains its natural supremacy over the mind, and will be the instrument of happiness or misery as its decisions approve or condemn the life. No gradations of society to suit the varieties of sinful character—no antagonistic and false standards of honor, to soothe, and flatter, and deceive the unholy; no compensation is found in the moral sympathies of one rank, for the loss of honor in another; no sensual delights to allure and to intoxicate; but sin is left to take its unmitigated action upon the unsheltered soul.

We have now traced the effects of sin upon the individual so far as it affects his relations to other beings. We pursue our inquiry but one step further. We enter the inner temple of the soul, and ask, "What are the effects of sin upon its mysterious frame-work?" We have already, in part, forestalled the answer; but ah! what words can adequately describe a soul in ruins! The deep-hearted king of Israel has said, "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a *wounded spirit* who can bear?" Sin not only dismembers the soul from the loveliest appendages of its being, but cleaves down to the earth the noble spirit itself, and buries all its honor in the dust.

2. A consciousness of guilt awakens *remorse*—an emotion whose distressing effect upon the mind has furnished a theme for the philosopher, the orator, and the poet, and an object of appalling dread to all classes, in all ages of the world. Remorse is a complex emotion, consisting of simple regret, and moral disapprobation of one's self; in other words, it is *moral regret.* Regret is the opposite of gladness, and arises from the knowledge of the loss of some real or supposed good. The strength of the emotion, and its consequent power to produce distress, will be proportioned to the value of the object whose loss has occasioned it. But it is not merely the reflection that heaven, with all its loveliness, is now for ever lost, that gives strength and pungency to the regrets of the ruined soul. This, indeed, is infinitely painful, though it appeals to no higher principle of our nature than that of self-interest. But another class of feelings is to be enlisted, and a deeper fountain of sensibility opened in the guilty breast. It is not the thought of having acted unwisely for himself only, but of having violated obligation, of having acted perversely and wickedly in all his moral relations, that harrows the deepest sensibility of his heart. He has not merely deprived himself of enjoyment, he has insulted his Maker, and transgressed the moral order of the universe. The reflection,

"You knew your duty, but you did it not,"

strikes at the deepest depths of the moral nature, gives the regret the character of remorse, and makes perdition no longer the mere result of *place*, or external circumstances, but of the *state* of the soul. The seat of the torment is within. Physical condition exerts its influence, but the unhappy being is in himself wretched.

"*Me* miserable! which way shall I fly
Infinite wrath, and infinite despair?
Which way I fly is hell; *myself* am hell!"

The pain we feel, arising from disapprobation of another's crime, is mitigated by the mere distance at which it is removed—it is not our own act; the wrecks of the hopes and fortunes of others, which are strown around our path, though painful to contemplate, are yet extraneous to ourselves; our personal calamities are borne with fortitude, while innocence dwells within; the regrets we experience in this life are always modified by some alleviating mixture, which kind Heaven mingles in our cup: but to the finally lost no element of relief is administered. Remorse breaks up the deep, internal peace of his soul, and sweeps a desolating tide over all the landmarks of happiness. It is guilt that bows the strong pillars of the inner temple, and prostrates the soul in ruins. No power of resistance is left. Existence gives the necessary power of endurance, but not of remedy. The soul, grand even in ruins,

> "—— having leapt from its more dazzling height,
> E'en in the foaming strength of its abyss,
> Lies low, but mighty still."

"Think not," says Cicero, "that the guilty require the burning torches of the Furies to agitate and torment them. Their own frauds, their crimes, their remembrance of the past, their terrors of the future, these are the domestic furies that are ever present to the mind of the impious." Could he fly himself, could he obliterate the memory of the past, could he forget for a moment what he is, in the interest he might take in other objects, his case would not be altogether destitute of relief. But this can never be:

> "He bears his own tormentor in his breast,"

and *that* worm dieth not. The thoughts of what he was, what he should have been, what he is, and must for ever be, haunt him with unceasing terror, like spectres of the injured dead.

> "The keen vibration of bright truth—is hell!"

The hours of misspent time now repeat their solemn knell; the neglected mercies, the unheeded admonitions, the tender sympathy and counsel of pious friends, the opportunities of repentance, the half-formed purpose of reformation—all that he has done and all that he has left undone—now glance before the mind, and awaken the deep, the last, the long lament. "So perish all thy enemies, O Jehovah!"

> "So do the dark in soul expire,
> Or live like scorpion girt by fire;
> So writhes the mind remorse hath riven,
> Unfit for earth, undoom'd for heaven;
> Darkness above, despair beneath,
> Around it flame, within it—*death!*"

In conclusion of this discourse let us recapitulate a few of those practical considerations to which our discussion has led us. We here learn,

1. How delusive is that hope of future happiness, which, though it is built upon the natural goodness of God, manifested through a Mediator, makes no necessary reckoning of a holy life. But it is not in the province of Omnipotence to produce moral happiness in a polluted soul. Such happiness in such a soul would imply a contradiction. Omnipotence could change the mental constitution, but not the relation of sin and misery. Without moral fitness for the place, heaven itself would lose its attractions—'twould be "the severest part of hell." Consider this, all ye that forget God—ye that slumber within the pale of the Christian church. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

2. We here perceive the reasonableness as well as certainty of future punishment. It would not become us to dogmatize upon any physical theory of a future state. The Bible says little here. Yet we can advance thus far. We can see that the misery of the lost is not wholly an arbitrary appointment, but results in great measure—we cannot tell how far—in a course of natural consequences. If our present existence could be maintained where none of our bodily senses, our appetites, affections, or desires, could meet with their appropriate objects, and still operate with unabated and ever-increasing intensity, it would not be in the power of the human mind to conceive the wretchedness of such a state. Yet all this misery would result in a way of natural consequences. Nothing would be superadded by way of positive infliction. There is a limit to the human capacity for suffering, as well as for knowledge and happiness, and whether the soul is capable of enduring

more than would naturally accrue to it in a condition the exact reverse of that for which it was intended, the Author of our constitution alone can tell. One thing is certain, moral punishment is in accordance with what we know of the constitution of the mind—is inevitable in certain moral conditions. Its extent, which is solemnly portrayed in Scripture, may also be judged of by the rule of analogy. The more complicated and delicate the animal system, the more serious, and distressing, and difficult to heal, is any violence offered to its organs. The higher we rise in the scale of being, the more fearful and ruinous would be our fall. The texture and powers of the soul bespeak the highest creative wisdom. The necessary law of all organic life applies analogically here. Its amazing altitude in the grade of existence, implies, by necessary consequence, an abyss of descent, inversely profound, through which it must inevitably pass, if it fail to reach the noble destiny of its being.

3. Behold here the extent to which man's moral destiny is placed in his own hands. Happiness results from right moral culture; misery from neglect and abuse. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." "If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself: but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it."

4. Finally, learn from the text that human life is the limit of probation. When the "body and flesh are consumed," then, "at the last," bitter regrets arise to the wicked; but no hope of mercy, no offer of pardon, no purpose of repentance, alleviates their distress. "As the tree falleth, so it will lie." "After death is the judgment." Solomon associates no hope with the death-scene of this young profligate:

> "Cut off, e'en in the blossom of his sins,
> No reck'ning made, but sent to his account
> With all his imperfections on his head."

Hearer, art thou ready for this account? If not, "now—now only—is the accepted time and day of salvation."

SERMON XXIV.

Character and Work of a Minister of Jesus Christ.

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"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."—2 Cor. v, 20.

ALLOWING the truth of Christianity, it will follow that the character of a Christian minister is of the highest importance to the welfare of mankind. Without entering into an investigation of its truth, which would be out of place on the present occasion, I will endeavor briefly to inquire—

I. INTO THE CHARACTER OF A MINISTER OF CHRIST.

II. INTO HIS WORK.

I. *In respect to his character.*

The text affirms that he is an "ambassador for Christ." An ambassador is considered of the highest dignity in the state, next to the sovereign, whose person and authority he is sent to represent at a foreign court. The will of the sovereign is communicated to his ambassador, and he is bound to regulate his conduct in his official intercourse with the foreign nation according to that will. Jesus Christ while on the earth represented the Sovereign of the universe. He is now in heaven, exalted to the government of the world, and hence his ministers are his representatives to man, sent by him to proclaim his will, to explain the terms of reconciliation between God and rebellious man. These remarks will show the high character an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ sustains in the economy of God, as well as the importance of the work assigned him.

1. It is essential that he should know the mind and will of God. In order to this, he should not only study them as a theory, but the truth of God should be sealed upon his conscience by the Holy Ghost. However accurate may be his theory of divine truth as it is revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and indicated in His works and ways, unless his heart be made to feel its weight and importance, from

an experimental knowledge of Jesus Christ as his Saviour, who has saved him from his sins, he cannot either understand or explain this truth to others: "If the blind lead the blind, they shall both fall into the ditch." And until a man's understanding is enlightened by the Spirit of God, however expanded and improved his intellect, he is blind to spiritual and divine things; and hence he is incompetent to instruct others in those lessons of heavenly wisdom. Nor can human learning, splendid talents, all the acquirements of human science, supersede the necessity of this experimental knowledge of pure religion,—though with this experience, this learning, these talents and acquirements, may be made powerfully subservient to the advancement of the cause in which he is engaged.

How indeed can a man who has never been converted, justified, and sanctified, explain to others what conversion, justification, and sanctification, are? You might as well call upon a blind man to judge of colors, as to allow a blinded sinner to judge of and to explain the nature and effects of true religion. This, then, is considered an essential prerequisite for a minister of the Lord Jesus.

2. But not every one who has been thus brought to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, is competent to the ministry of the gospel. In addition to this, he must be especially called to this work by the Holy Ghost. This is acknowledged, in form, by nearly all orthodox churches under heaven; while in practice it is discarded by many as enthusiasm. If we turn our attention to the Holy Scriptures, we shall find all the prophets and apostles recognizing this divine call to the work in which they were engaged; and the same truth is acknowledged in the formularies of all those Christian churches which are considered orthodox; a most manifest proof this, that an inward call by the Holy Spirit is to be considered as necessary to entitle a man to enter into the ministry of the Lord Jesus.

He, as the sovereign of heaven and earth, claims and exercises the right of selecting his own "ambassadors," because he alone knows who are the fittest persons to be employed in this grand and important work. And he can as easily suggest his mind to the heart of a Christian man, now, as he did to Paul, when he said unto him, "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee." A man who is conscious of this inward call to the Christian ministry, feels himself impelled on, often indeed with great reluctance, under a sense of his high responsibility to God, his heart heaving under a deep conviction of the worth of immortal souls; and so pressed is he in spirit that he cries out in the language of the apostle, "Wo is me if I preach not the gospel." Such a man is not actuated by motives of ambition, by worldly interests, or to gratify self-love, but by an intense desire to advance the Redeemer's kingdom in the present and eternal salvation of immortal souls. Hence, so far from striving to shine in the galaxy of human wisdom, to display himself in the exhibition of his talents in science and oratory, he naturally shrinks from human observation, bemoans himself before his God, seeks to enter into the secrets of the Most High, to penetrate into the meaning of his word, that he may unfold it to the multitude in language plain, simple, and pointed. Such a man, indeed, will not preach "with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." His countenance, his gestures, the intonations of his voice, as well as the words of his lips, will all declare the earnestness of his heart and the sincerity of his intention, whenever he appears "in that holy place, the pulpit," to unfold the counsels of God to a fallen world—to beseech sinners "to be reconciled to God."

3. This heartfelt experience of divine things, and this consciousness of God's will respecting his calling, must be accompanied with a clear and comprehensive knowledge of the plan of redemption and salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord. It would be preposterous to suppose that God would call a man to negotiate a peace between him and man, who did not understand the terms of reconciliation—who did not comprehend, in some tolerable degree, what He has done for the salvation of a lost world, and the conditions on which this salvation is to be obtained and kept. Is it to be supposed that God would select a man to be his ambassador, and send him to represent him to a revolted world, who could not understand the very terms on which

this world is to be brought back to its allegiance to its Sovereign? How could such "a novice" defend the rights of God, explain his will, and enforce his demands upon the conscience of the sinner?

Neither are we to suppose that this understanding of the will of God is communicated by a miraculous interposition. Though God undoubtedly operates upon the heart by his Holy Spirit, so as to produce a consciousness of his holy presence; and though he most unquestionably calls a man to the work of the ministry by the same Holy Spirit; yet it is manifest that he generally does all this through the agency of secondary causes; and much more does he qualify his ministers by means of those ordinary instrumentalities which are adapted to produce the desired result. If, therefore, a man would know the mind of God, he must study his word, watch the operation of his providence, and hearken diligently to all the admonitions which are afforded him in the daily walks of life. "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed," was the apostolic command to the evangelist. So that, in those days of plenary inspiration, it was thought necessary, for the efficient discharge of ministerial duty, for the incumbent to "study;" while the principal object of the study was that he might "approve himself to God," and not be ashamed to show himself to man, but be able "rightly to divide the word of truth." How much more imperative is it for us, who are blessed with only the ordinary means of information, to study with all diligence, that we may ascertain the will of God concerning us, and be able so to propound it that the people may feel its force, and be induced to yield to its requisitions! A professed minister, who so depends upon divine aid as to neglect those helps which are within his reach to enable him to understand the word of God, manifests both folly and indolence, and proves himself unworthy of the office he holds.

4. He must not only understand the plan of redemption and salvation, but he must be competent to explain it to others. In order to this, he must comprehend the meaning of words, and have that power of elocution which will enable him to clothe his thoughts in a style plain and easy to be understood. Avoiding equally that pomposity of

style which raises a suspicion of vanity, and those vulgarisms which show a lack of correct taste—both of which are beneath the dignity and purity of the pulpit—it will be his study to select those words which reflect precisely and plainly the ideas he wishes to communicate, and so to form his style that his sentences may flow from him easily and naturally, without any apparent effort to astonish his hearers with "swelling words of vanity." A minister who perceives his subject clearly, and is sufficient master of language to clothe his thoughts with appropriate words, will seldom be at a loss to express himself with ease and fluency.

5. As to human learning, the more profoundly learned a minister of Jesus Christ is, provided he be blessed with those spiritual qualifications above indicated, the more effectually can he "wield the sword of the Spirit," the more deeply can he dive into the ocean of the Eternal Mind, and fetch up thence those gems of truth which lie in those immense depths of divine wisdom, power, justice, and goodness, and spread them before his hearers in all their sparkling glories. We care not, therefore, how much learning a man has, if it be only sanctified, and used in subserviency to the great end of the Christian ministry—namely, the salvation of the lost world. Those who affect to despise human learning, certainly do not consider how much they are indebted to learned men for those civil and religious blessings which they enjoy. Are we thankful to God for the privilege of reading the sacred Scriptures in our vernacular language? And do we not know that had not God raised up men of sufficient talent, learning, and industry, to understand the original languages in which these Scriptures were first written, and to translate them into our own language, we never could have enjoyed this distinguished privilege? Next to pure religion in the heart, sound learning, comprehending a knowledge of the ancient languages, and a thorough acquaintance with the sciences, is to be prized.* But more especially should a minister

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* I do not mean to assert that classical learning, nor a regular theological training, is essential to a gospel minister. But while these are excluded as being essential qualifications, I do mean to assert that no man is competent to preach the gospel without a thorough knowledge of theological truth, and that the more his mind is imbued with

of the sanctuary be learned in the sacred Scriptures, in every branch of theological truth, so as to be able to defend himself against all his adversaries, to meet and obviate the objections of caviling infidels, and to remove out of the way of the sinner every obstruction to his returning to God, that he may live. Nor can he keep up with the improvements of the age, the constant progress of science, without a diligent attention to study—to such a course of reading as will enable him to comprehend those great principles of theology which interweave themselves, less or more, with every relation in life, and therefore ought to sanctify and guide all the pursuits and actions of mankind in their intercourse with each other. To avoid error, however specious, on its first appearance; to disentangle the sophistries, however plausible, by which its authors and advocates attempt its support; and to establish the truth on the firm basis of immutable principles, will require no small degree of assiduous application of the mental powers, and a careful analysis of the various systems and theories which may be broached. And he who flatters himself that he is adequate to this task without attention to close study and diligent observation, betrays thereby the want of that very learning and information we are recommending, and which are necessary to a successful discharge of his duty. The fountain must be constantly supplied, or it will soon become dry from continual draining. So the mind must be fed continually, or it will become barren and unfruitful, not only for want of food suited to its nature, but also for lack of that exercise which is essential to the vigorous development of its energies.

6. But with all these helps to a right understanding of the Holy Scriptures, and to a successful prosecution of his high calling, he will fail to accomplish the end of his ministry, unless he live in God—unless he can say, with the great apostle to the Gentiles, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Without this constant communion with God, through faith in the Lord Jesus, however deep and accurate may be our theological researches, and however elo-

learning and science in general, the more competent will he be to explain and defend the truth of God.

quently we may deliver our discourses, we shall be but a "sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal;" our sermons will be dry and insipid; and though the understanding of the hearer may be delighted and the imagination charmed, the heart will remain unaffected; and though he may return home admiring the preacher, he will form no resolves to live more than ever devoted to God in heart and life. This breathing of the soul to God—this constant exercise of faith and prayer—this moving and walking in God, is essential to a minister of the Lord Jesus. If he would lead others forward in the divine life, he must be careful to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ;" if he would induce believers to "go on to perfection," he must be able to instruct them in the nature of this "perfect love" from his own experience, otherwise he will be incompetent to "speak of those things which he knows." If we would have a holy people, we must have a holy ministry. The minister must go before the people, and then he can say, "Follow me, as I follow Christ."

Besides, this is essential to enable him to speak in "the demonstration of the Spirit, and with power." There is a peculiar power, "an unction from the Holy One," attending the ministrations of a man who "walks in the Spirit," so that whenever he speaks in the name of God, his "doctrine shall drop as the rain, and his speech shall distill as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass." Whenever such an ambassador of Christ speaks, God attends his word with the energies of the Holy Spirit, the people of God feel its power in their inmost souls, they are thereby refreshed and invigorated, and "rejoice in hope of the glory of God;" while sinners are often made to fear and tremble, in the presence of that God, whose awful majesty this minister unfolds. This living in God, acting continually under the influence of his Spirit, will also tend to furnish the mind with suitable subjects, will qualify the minister to understand the mind of God more clearly than he otherwise could; to penetrate deeper into the meaning of Holy Scripture; and thus teach him how to suit himself more perfectly to times and circumstances, so that he can be always ready "to rebuke, exhort, in season and out of season, with all long-suffering and doctrine."

How forcible and apposite are the words of Luther, which he addressed to Spalatin, who had requested him to give him the best method of studying the Scriptures!

"It is plain," says Luther, "we cannot attain to the understanding of Scripture either by study or the strength of intellect. Therefore your first duty must be to begin with prayer. Entreat the Lord to deign to grant you, in his rich mercy, rightly to understand his word. There is no other interpreter of God's word but the Author of that word himself; even as he has said, 'They shall be taught of God.' Hope nothing from your study, or the strength of your intellect; but simply put your trust in God, and in the guidance of his Spirit. Believe one who has made trial of this method."

It is not to be understood that Luther meant to discourage his friend from a diligent study, any more than from a vigorous exercise, of his intellectual powers, for this would be contrary to the whole course of his life; but simply that neither the one nor the other, nor yet both together, would supersede the necessity of the Holy Spirit to open the meaning of God's word, and more especially to enable the minister rightly to apply it to the various cases and circumstances of those to whom he may be called upon to administer the word of life. This, then, above all other things, is essential to a minister of the Lord Jesus, to feel that he is united to God by the Holy Spirit, that he may "receive the law at his mouth," and proclaim it with freshness and fullness unto the people.

It is to be remembered that Jesus Christ promised to be with his ministers "always, even to the end of the world." This promise, however, is to be limited in its application to his true ministers, to those who have been called and sent out by himself, whom he has "anointed to preach the gospel," and in whom dwells the Holy Spirit. With such, and only such, is he always present, to enlighten, to guide, and to comfort them. He will fill them "with peace and joy in believing," and they shall never be left to contend alone, so that "no weapon that is formed against them shall prosper, and every tongue that riseth in judgment against them will he condemn." This heritage have those ministers from their Lord, and he will never suffer them to be confounded by their adversaries. The word that they speak shall accomplish that whereunto it is sent.

7. I need hardly add that ministers must be men of prayer. This has been supposed in all that has been said. A holy man is a praying man; and a man cannot live by faith in Christ, walk with God, and hold communion with him, without constant prayer and watchfulness. And of all men in the world, the minister of the sanctuary has the most need to "pray without ceasing." Such a one will "wrestle in the mighty strength of prayer," that he may be "endowed with power from on high," and be able to "withstand all the fiery darts of the devil."

That these holy and indefatigable ministers will have enemies, visible and invisible, to contend with, is abundantly manifest. They who are sent in the name of the Sovereign of heaven and earth, to proclaim war against the world, the flesh, and the devil, to vindicate the rights of God against the invasions of his grand adversary, must expect to meet with opposition from the combined powers of earth and hell, and thus to expose themselves to the shafts of those cruel enemies of God and man. How are they to defend themselves? "Greater is He that is for them than he that is against them." But he has promised to defend them only on condition of their confiding in him, of their fleeing to him for succor by faith and prayer. But he *has* promised to give his Holy Spirit to them that *ask* him. Hence the necessity of unceasing prayer for the constant aid of this Holy Spirit, that he may help our infirmities, illuminate our understandings, sanctify our affections, and bless the labor of our heads and hearts in the cause in which we are engaged.

Thus, then, we have the character of the true minister of the sanctuary. He has been genuinely converted to God; called to his work by the Head of the church; understands the plan of redemption and salvation; improves his mind by continual study and observation; lives and walks in daily communion with God by a lively faith in Jesus Christ; and if he has not yet attained to the blessing of perfect love, is groaning after it; and is kept, in answer to unceasing prayer, by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation. Such a person is surely qualified to stand before the people as God's ambassador, and, if duly consecrated, is authorized to administer all the ordinances of God's house.

Having ascertained the character of the minister of Jesus Christ, let us,

II. *Inquire into his work.*

The text says, it is to beseech sinners, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God. And what a work is this! He stands before the world as God's accredited ambassador, clothed with authority by Jesus Christ himself, to propose unto mankind the terms on which they who are "enemies to God by wicked works" may become reconciled, and thereby be taken into a covenant union with him. In doing this, however, they are not at liberty to propose terms of their own invention, or to alter or soften down those which God has prescribed. As an ambassador is obliged to observe scrupulously the instructions which are given him by the head of the government he represents, so he who is sent by the Head and Governor of the universe to represent him in this lower world, is bound by the instructions given him in God's sacred word, in all his intercourse with his rebellious subjects—not being allowed to accommodate himself to the whims, prejudices, or foolish pride of those with whom he is sent to treat.

Observe the language of the text: "We pray you in Christ's stead, be YE reconciled to God." He does not say, "I pray God be reconciled to you." The apostle had before declared, that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." Everything has been done on the part of God for the salvation of the lost. Indeed, he was ever moved toward man by love. Love moved him to send Jesus Christ to be the "propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." "God so loved"—not hated—"the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son." "We love him because he first loved us." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." The whole scheme of redemption originated from God's eternal and unbounded love to a fallen world. This led him to devise and execute this grand system for the salvation of sinners; and all that remains to give it effect is for sinners to accept of it upon the terms prescribed. The moment they do this, the reconciling "love of God is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost." There is, therefore, no want of a disposition in God to save even the vilest of sinners. The sacrifice has been offered and accepted by God. "All things are now ready." The feast is prepared, the doors are opened, and the servants, the ambassadors, are sent out to invite the famishing sons and daughters of men to come in, that they may eat and live. These high and distinguished truths the ambassador is commissioned to declare, promptly and plainly; to enforce them by all those motives arising from the free and boundless love of God to a lost world, and in his name to beseech sinners to be reconciled to God on the terms of the gospel. What are these terms? They are "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

1. Repentance. The necessity of this is founded upon the indisputable fact, that all mankind have done wrong—have "all sinned, and come short of the glory of God." They have sinned unnecessarily and voluntarily, and therefore it is but reasonable that they should repent. And this repentance includes a godly sorrow for sin, a desire and determination to forsake it, and thus to be reconciled to this part of the requirement of Almighty God.

2. Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. This presents Christ as the proper object of the penitent sinner's faith. He is revealed in the Holy Scriptures as having atoned for the sins of the whole world, and therefore is set forth to the penitent sinner's mind as *his* Saviour, as having died for *him*, and as now interceding at the right hand of the Father for *him*, and hence is *now* able and willing to "save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." Herein is founded the grand cardinal doctrine of the gospel, namely, *justification by grace, through faith in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.* As there is "no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we may be saved," so there is no other medium through which this salvation can be received besides faith. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Neither our prayers, our penitential tears and groans, our almsgiving, our vows of amendment, can avail anything to our justification without an application of the

blood of Christ through the agency of the Holy Spirit; and this is to be apprehended and received by faith alone —such a belief as takes God at his word when he says, "I will; be thou clean."

3. Now the great work of the minister is, to persuade sinners to be reconciled to this method of salvation. They will resort to a thousand objections, in order to excuse themselves from submitting to these terms of reconciliation. And the skill of the minister is exemplified in obviating these objections, in stripping the sinner of

"Every plea beside,
Lord, I am damn'd,
But Christ hath died."

In order to this he must point the arrows of truth to his conscience, and make him feel his wretchedness; and when he has succeeded in doing this, he must then "beseech" him "to be reconciled to God," by casting himself, by a simple act of faith, as a helpless, condemned culprit, upon the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. If he finds him slow to believe, dilatory in seeking for "redemption in the blood of Christ," he must urge him forward by every consideration of judgment and mercy, and exhort him to make haste to "flee from the wrath to come." Nor must the minister leave this trembling sinner until he finds him safely sheltered in the arms of the Redeemer's love—until he throws himself by faith into the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ. When he does this, it may be said of him, "It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemneth?"

4. So far all is well. But the work of the minister is not yet done. This believing, justified sinner, is to be "built up in his most holy faith." The "roots of bitterness" which remain in his heart must be eradicated, and then his heart must be filled with "perfect love." He must be exhorted to "go on to perfection." Nor may he stop short of the height, and depth, and length, of the love of God. In order to this, he must be taught the necessity of "laying aside every weight, and the sin which so easily besets him"—of running the "race which is set before him." All this must be fully and plainly presented to him, as freely guarantied to him in the gospel of his salvation, and even *now* graciously offered to his acceptance on the simple terms of his believing in Christ "with the heart

unto righteousness." And as all this enters into God's plan of salvation, so, to be fully reconciled unto him, it must be entirely and willingly submitted to, that the believing sinner may "inherit the promises."

5. I have not space to enumerate all the various parts of the work of a minister of the Lord Jesus, who is "set for the defense of the gospel," and who is required to be a "wise and faithful steward over the household" of God. The necessity of watching over the flock which has been committed to his care will constantly press itself upon his mind; and so tremendous will his responsibility appear, that it will absorb his whole time and attention, and propel him forward in the assiduous discharge of every duty, public and private, whether of a ministerial, pastoral, or disciplinary character. As a Methodist minister, in addition to his public duties in the pulpit every sabbath, and frequently on the week-days, he has societies to regulate, classes to meet, love-feasts to attend, missionary and other societies to superintend, the sick to visit, funerals to attend, and marriages to celebrate, as well as baptisms and the Lord's supper to administer. While some of these duties are common to all ministers of the gospel, of every order, there are others peculiar to a Methodist, and which cannot be dispensed with without incurring censure. Surely these onerous duties are sufficient to occupy all his time, to exercise all his talent, and to try all his graces, that he may discharge them with fidelity and success. He who has taken upon himself the important trust implied in his being an ambassador of Jesus Christ, that can spend his moments in inactivity, in idle recreation, or in cracking his jokes with the facetious witling, will have an awful account to give when the Lord "shall make inquisition for blood."

6. As I said at the commencement of this discourse, a minister of Jesus Christ sustains one of the highest, if not, indeed, the very highest, characters a mortal man can sustain. He stands as the representative of God, occupying the place of Jesus Christ, charged with the awful message of life and death, the terms of which he is bound to propose, to explain, and to enforce, with all the power of eternal truth, and to "beseech" sinners, with all those arguments derived from the authority of God, and with those eloquent appeals to their consciences, which an intense

desire for their salvation can inspire, "to be reconciled to God." Should he then betray his trust, by neglecting any of those means which are necessary to qualify him for a successful discharge of his duty, he will be illy prepared to give a joyful account to the Sovereign who sent him on this important embassy.

On the other hand, those who discharge their high trust with fidelity shall be finally made "rulers over many cities." What a motive does this consideration present to the minister to be faithful over the comparatively few things which have been committed to his trust! "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

The language of the heart of such a minister may be expressed in the following lines, which, for poetical excellence, evangelical sentiment, firm resolution, and strong, vigorous faith, are not surpassed in the English language:

"Ten thousand snares my paths beset,
Yet will I, Lord, the work complete
Which thou to me hast given;
Regardless of the pains I feel,
Close by the gates of death and hell,
I urge my way to heaven.

"Still will I strive, and labor still,
With humble zeal to do thy will,
And trust in thy defense;
My soul into thy hands I give,
And if he can obtain thy leave,
Let Satan pluck me hence."

7. I feel the importance of this subject. I would, therefore, press it upon the hearer's attention and heart, with all becoming earnestness.

One of the greatest curses which ever came upon the church, was the introduction of carnal, blind, unconverted, and, of course, unholy and immoral ministers, into the sacred office. Not understanding the way of life themselves, because they were never enlightened by the "Spirit of truth," they were unqualified to teach it to others. These men, entering into the ministry from the same unhallowed motive that actuates men of the world in their secular pursuits, namely, that they may "eat a morsel of bread," have contributed to obscure the peculiar glories of Christianity and of the Christian character, have introduced a variety of corruptions, and shaped the external features of the church after the fashion of the civil institutions of the land; and thus the church has, at different times, been more distinguished by its external pomp and splendor, than, as it should have been, by its internal glories, the spiritual purity of its members and ministers. Read the history of the church, and even now look abroad upon the Christian world for evidences of the truth of these remarks.

How shall we guard against these evils? Doubtless by keeping the ministry pure. Not only by keeping out those who have never been called and qualified by God himself, but also by carefully guarding against that backsliding of heart by which the Christian minister gradually loses the spirit of his station, becomes careless respecting his spiritual enjoyments, and slides, perhaps almost imperceptibly, into the spirit and false maxims of the world. Whenever this is the case, he will be more solicitous to please men than God, more anxious to be esteemed for his greatness than for his goodness, and much more scrupulous for the shadow, the mere forms of godliness, than he is for its substance or its power.

O, if all the professed ministers of Jesus Christ were truly holy, exemplifying the spirit of the Christian ministry in their tempers and conduct, and were earnestly engaged in proclaiming, with the "Holy Ghost sent down from heaven," the "unsearchable riches of Christ," what a rapid spread of the gospel of the grace of God should we behold! Surely the earth would speedily be "filled with the knowledge of God," and all the world would bow to the sceptre of Jesus Christ. Such ministers can feelingly adopt the following lines:—

"Give me the faith which can remove
And sink the mountain to a plain;
Give me the childlike, praying love,
Which longs to build thy house again;
Thy love, let it my heart o'erpower,
And all my simple soul devour.

"Enlarge, inflame, and fill my heart,
With boundless charity divine!
So shall I all my strength exert,
And love them with a zeal like thine,
And lead them to thy open side,
The sheep for whom the Shepherd died."

SERMON XXV.

*The Office and Work of a Christian Bishop.**

BY REV. P. P. SANDFORD,

OF THE NEW-YORK CONFERENCE.

"Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation; Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."—Heb. xiii, 7, 8.

"Who had the rule over you." Wesley and Coke. "Who have been your spiritual guides." Dr. Heylin. These learned critics, with Theodoret, Dr. M'Knight, and Dr. A. Clarke, all agree in applying the text to deceased Christian ministers.

My beloved friends, we are called together this evening to pay a tribute of respect to one of our distinguished spiritual guides—one of our fathers in Israel, who for several years past has gone in and out before the whole church—the venerated Robert R. Roberts; for some time the senior bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church. By the request of my brethren in the ministry in this city, it has devolved upon me, on the present occasion, to attempt some improvement of the mournful event which has removed him from our society, and numbered him among the silent dead. Under these circumstances I cannot but deeply regret the want of information concerning the history of the bishop's life, especially of his early life, and the circumstances attendant on his death; as no documents are in my possession relating to him, except the Minutes of Annual Conferences, and a brief notice of his death communicated through the medium of the Western Christian Advocate, published at Cincinnati, Ohio. Were I ever so competent, therefore, to do justice to my subject when in possession of the necessary information, I must necessarily fail to do so under the present circumstances. Still, we may receive instruction from the event itself; as every instance of human mortality is calculated to teach us that we too are mortal—that life is held by us upon a very precarious tenure; and that, therefore, it is our only true wisdom to prepare for death, and our eternal state. "Our fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live for ever?" No, brethren,—

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* A funeral discourse delivered on the occasion of the death of Bishop Roberts, in the Bedford-street M. E. church, New-York city, in the month of April, 1843.

> "The tall, the wise, the reverend head,
> Must lie as low as ours."

This leader in our Israel, this ruler of the church, this guide of our souls, is gone down to the house appointed for all the living. We shall hear his voice of authority and instruction no more. No more will he stand at the head of our spiritual army, or lead the soldiers of the cross of Christ to battle, to war, and to conquest, over our spiritual enemies.

But I must recall your attention to the text. From the remarks already made, it will be seen, that, in the opinion of several of the wisest, most learned, and best of men, the text refers to our deceased spiritual guides or pastors; and, therefore, as our deceased bishop was a general pastor over the whole of our branch of the Christian church, the subject may be legitimately applied to him, and to those who, like him, have sustained this important relation to our spiritual Zion. In this view, therefore, I purpose to consider it in the present discourse.

I. THE OFFICE AND WORK OF A CHRISTIAN BISHOP.

1. *The office of a bishop*, in its essential character, is that of a Christian minister. A Christian minister should be acquainted with experimental religion; as nothing short of an experience of the grace of God, in Christ Jesus, can qualify a man to instruct and guide his fellow-creatures in the way of eternal life. But this experimental knowledge of God, however important it may be, is not of itself sufficient to authorize any man to assume this office; neither will human learning, however extensive; nor human eloquence, however great; nor any authority derived merely from man, confer the right to exercise the functions of this sacred office. No man can legitimately assume this office unless he be expressly commissioned from on high. It is the exclusive prerogative of the great Head of the church himself to make a Christian minister. This doctrine is recognized by all those churches which have any

legitimate claim to be considered evangelical, or true churches of Christ, as is evident from the fact, that they all require their candidates for the sacred office to profess their firm persuasion that they are "moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon themselves this office and ministry." The church cannot make ministers for itself; neither can the ministers or bishops of the church, of any order, confer the necessary authority. All that the church, its ministers, and bishops, can do in the premises, is, to give their attestation to the fact, that the person professing to be called of God to the office of the Christian ministry is truly called of God to this office. And it is agreeable both to reason and Scripture, that all persons assuming that they are thus called of God, should give such evidence of the validity of their call to the church and its ministry, as to obtain their testimony in their favor; and also that the church and ministers with whom any person wishes to be associated in the discharge of the duties of this sacred office, in presenting their testimony in his favor, should give sufficient public attestation to this conviction, to render him a duly accredited minister of the gospel. Hence, in the apostolic, and every succeeding age of the church, this has been done by the laying on of the hands of persons who were themselves duly accredited ministers of Christ. Strictly speaking, there are but two orders of the Christian ministry; namely, deacons and elders; the latter only being invested with the full powers of the Christian ministry. The pastoral authority, in any branch of the Christian church, exists in the body of presbyters or elders. But, nevertheless, the body of elders may, when they find it expedient so to do, for prudential reasons, elevate one or more of their number to the office of a general pastor, or superintendent, over the whole body, both lay and clerical, and invest such elevated persons with supreme jurisdiction over the individual members and ministers of the church, including the exclusive right of ordination, for the time being, but holding them accountable to the whole body of elders for the due performance of their official duties, and for their ministerial and Christian conduct. The persons thus elevated are emphatically the superintendents or bishops of the whole of that Christian community. Now, as it is the duty of the church to "obey them that have the spiritual rule over them," that is, their ministers who hold the relation of pastors to them; so it is the duty of the ministers and members of the church to obey, or submit themselves to the legitimate spiritual control of these general pastors or bishops, while they keep within the limits of their delegated authority.

On the principle stated above the Methodist Episcopal Church is founded; and from this source the authority of the bishops of this church is derived. Here, therefore, we may learn the nature of the episcopal office, as it exists among ourselves. Now, however it may be with those churches whose ministers are settled among the people of a single congregation for a course of years, or during life, no church whose ministry is generally itinerant could dispense with such an episcopacy in fact, though they may not have it in form: and, in our estimation, an itinerant ministry, or a ministry which is missionary in its character, is essential to the healthful condition of the Christian church, and the extension of pure Christianity in the world. Our brethren of the Wesleyan Church in Europe, though they have not an episcopacy in form, have one in fact, and ever have had it among them, in as efficient operation as we have in this country. Hence, our venerable brother, Rev. Robert Newton, when in this country, observed in the presence of our General Conference, "Our president never dies." Their president is elected by the conference annually, and continues in office till another is chosen to succeed him; and during his term of office is, in fact, an efficient bishop of their church, possessing as much, and, in some respects, even more, authority than our bishops.

2. *Their work.*

The office of a bishop in the Methodist Episcopal Church is no sinecure. Our bishops are not lords or masters over the church; they are its servants; they possess no legislative authority; no power to make or veto the rules by which either the church or themselves are governed. All the power they have, in this respect, consists in presiding in the General Conference, and recommending to that body such measures as they desire them to take into consideration. Their authority, as bishops, is exclusively executive and judiciary; in addition to which their powers as Christian ministers are the same as those of their brethren in the ministry. The faithful discharge of their episcopal and ministerial duties renders it necessary that they be emphatically working men.

Respecting their duties it may be remarked, that they are required to perform all the duties of the Christian life in common with other Christians; all the duties of the Christian ministry in common with other ministers; and, in addition, to perform the peculiar duties of their episcopal office.

The word of God is the paramount rule by which all their principles and conduct, in all these relations, is to be regulated. As Methodists, the rule of Christian faith and duty, drawn from the word of God, and imbodied in the Articles of Religion and in the rules of discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, must govern their faith and practice. As Methodist ministers, they must take the word of God as explained in our Articles of Religion and our standard writings, and the various rules of discipline respecting the duties of Christians and Christian ministers, as their rule of faith, of practice, of instruction, and of administration; and then they must discharge the peculiar duties of the episcopal office in the manner prescribed in the Discipline in addition. These rules require them to travel at large through the whole connection—to take the oversight of the entire community—to see that every part of the work, as far as practicable, is duly supplied with suitable, efficient pastors—and that the word, sacraments, and discipline, are duly administered to the people of our charge. It is the duty of these bishops, with the aid of such counsel as they may obtain, and that with the strictest impartiality, to appoint, from year to year, all the itinerant ministers and preachers of the church to their several fields of labor: to see that they are faithful in dispensing the word of God, and the sacraments and discipline of the gospel, in their several charges: to guard against the introduction of erroneous doctrine, indulgence in sinful practices, or neglect of duty in the pastors themselves or their people; and, at the same time, to prevent the tyrannical exercise of the power vested in the pastors as Christian ministers, or in the people, to oppress or injure their pastors.

In the discharge of their episcopal duties, the bishops must, as far as practicable, be present, and preside in all the annual conferences; see that all the business prescribed by the Discipline to be transacted by these conferences be duly attended to, and prevent improper business from being introduced; and ordain all such persons as are elected by these conferences to the offices of deacon and elder. In traveling from place to place it is the duty of a bishop, in his capacity of a general pastor, to visit as many of his ministers, societies, and members, as is consistent with his other duties, that he may know their state, and administer instruction, exhortation, consolation, or reproof to them, as their cases may require; and also that he may be prepared to judge of their spiritual wants, and to promote their spiritual prosperity.

But the duties of a bishop stop not here. He must personally administer to the people the word of God, that is, a bishop must be a preacher of the gospel. We have a brief but comprehensive summary of the gospel in our text, namely, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." To preach Christ, is to preach the whole gospel—to preach Christ, is to preach his eternal divinity—as is evident from our text. But I cannot enlarge here. A bishop should set the example of preaching Christ in his true character, and in all his offices, in such a manner as to exhibit the whole system of revealed religion, the entire scheme of redemption and salvation, and so to bring the gospel home to the consciences and hearts of his hearers as to preach "Christ in them, the hope of glory."

II. THE ESTEEM IN WHICH A BISHOP SHOULD BE HELD WHILE LIVING, AND AFTER HIS DECEASE.

1. The office of a Christian minister or bishop is not created for the benefit of the persons on whom it is conferred, but for the benefit of those over whom it is exercised. It is designed as an instrumentality of bringing sinners to repentance—to faith in Christ—and into a state of reconciliation with God and holiness:—to promote the spiritual advancement of the people of God—to build them up upon their most holy faith, and mature them for eternal life; that they may finally be exalted to the inheritance of the saints in light. Wherefore the apostle says in this chapter, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and

submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls as they that must give account; that they may do it with joy and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you." The Christian minister and bishop should be honored for his office' sake, as the apostle teaches in another of his epistles: "Let the elders that rule well be accounted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine." Every true minister of Christ, therefore, is entitled to reverence and respect from all his Christian brethren, especially a Christian bishop, for his office' sake. He is an ambassador of Christ; and therefore Christ says, "He that receiveth you receiveth me; and he that rejecteth you rejecteth me; and he that rejecteth me rejecteth Him that sent me." The respect due to the Christian ministry includes a due respect and attention to the instructions they communicate, and the precepts they enjoin and enforce. But modern Christian ministers and bishops are fallible men and liable to err, and therefore all the doctrines and precepts they teach must be tested by the word of God as contained in the Holy Scriptures: and as far as they disagree with this infallible standard of religious truth, they are to be rejected. But we are never at liberty to reject their teaching except it is found to be at variance with the Holy Scriptures: in all other cases we are bound to receive and obey their instructions. While we respect the persons and offices of these our spiritual guides, and listen to and obey their instructions, it is our duty to contribute, according to our ability, toward their temporal support, and the comfortable maintenance of their families. Our Lord Jesus Christ, in direct reference to this subject, has declared that "the laborer is worthy of his hire:" and the apostle Paul, that "the Lord hath ordained, that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel." And again: "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we reap your carnal (temporal) things?" In respect to support, there is no danger that Methodist ministers or bishops will be made rich by the emoluments of their office; and it is very desirable that they should be able to secure a competence for themselves and families in old age, or that the church should make sufficient provision for their support under these circumstances; which is not likely to be done very soon, unless the sympathies of the church toward our worn-out ministers and their families should be waked up to a much greater extent than they have been hitherto. Our bishops and other ministers stand on equal ground with respect to allowance and support, except that the former have their allowance estimated and paid by the ministry, and the latter by the laity. What a minister on a circuit or station shall be allowed for the support of his family, depends upon the determination of a committee selected from among the people of his charge, without allowing him to be a party to the contract; and what a bishop shall receive for the support of his family, depends upon the determination of the annual conference within whose bounds he has his family residence. When the estimated allowance for the year is made for a minister on a circuit or station, it frequently happens that a considerable part of it is never realized, and the minister must make the best shift in his power to do without it; and cancel the whole at the ensuing annual conference, even though one-half or three-fourths of the amount remains unpaid by both the people of his charge and the conference. On the other hand, the bishop receives his allowance partly from the annual conferences and partly from the Book Concern; and, as far as I am advised, he never is allowed to be deficient. If, therefore, our bishops are better provided for than our other ministers, it is only because there is more generosity on the part of the ministry than there is on that of the people. But, with all these pecuniary advantages of a Methodist bishop over those of his brethren in the ministry, our bishops receive, comparatively, but a slender support; and surely, when we take into account the extent of their labors, privations, suffering, and responsibilities, no one should grudge them a competent support for themselves and their families. This every minister of the gospel, who devotes himself to the work, should have through life; and his widow and orphans, if such are left by him, after his decease.

2. Deceased Christian ministers and bishops should be had in grateful remembrance, on account of the office they filled and the work they performed in the church and in the world. An inspired writer has said, "The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance:" and our text enjoins it upon us, to remember our spiritual guides,

who have ruled over us, and spoken to us the word of God, when they are laid in the dust. Therefore, the pious, laborious, faithful, and useful minister of Christ, who has devoted his life to the cause of God and the salvation of the souls of his fellow-men, should be gratefully remembered after he is taken from his labors to his eternal rest. One of the methods by which we should express our gratitude for his past labors is, by contributing to the comfortable support of his widow and orphan children. But, my beloved friends, how seldom is this adequately done! Frequently the Christian minister is caressed and honored by his people, while in the successful career of his official life; but when he falls in death, and disappears from among us, his lonely widow and orphan are comparatively unnoticed and forgotten, and left to pine away in penury and want; and sometimes even grudged the very small pittance allowed them by the Discipline of the church. With respect to the widow of a bishop, no adequate provision has yet been made, nor any specific direction given, by the General Conference, in what manner she shall receive the small pittance allowed her by the Discipline. It is hoped, however, that this will be attended to at the next session of that body in May, 1844.

But surviving Christians are bound to remember their deceased pastors, not only from motives of gratitude, but especially with a view to their own spiritual advantage and improvement. We should call to mind their heavenly instructions and their godly example. "Whose faith follow," says the text; that is, improve upon his instructions and example, now that he is no more with you. That you may do this, "consider the end" of his instructions, even your own salvation; consider also the example he once set before you for your improvement; consider how he ended his course,—he ended his career on earth in the peace or triumph of the Christian faith. Finally, remember that Christ was the Alpha and Omega of his teaching, both public and private—of his faith and hope, and of his entire course of life. To be like Christ—to make you like Christ—was the height of his ambition. To die in Christ, to reign with Christ, and to present you to Christ, "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing," and thereby to promote the glory of God, the honor of the Redeemer, his own and his hearers' eternal felicity, was the great end of all his labors and his sufferings in life.

In this manner a deceased pastor should be remembered by us. Here, therefore, we shall rest the subject, and proceed to call your attention to a brief notice of the life, death, and character of our deceased bishop.

REV. ROBERT RICHFORD ROBERTS is said to have been born in Frederick county, Maryland, and raised in Adams county, Pennsylvania. Of the time of his birth I am not informed. His age is supposed to have been about sixty-five years, though, from his aged appearance for a few years past, strangers would have judged him to be much older. Of his early history I have no knowledge.* The only documents, containing any information of our venerable friend, on which I have been able to lay my hands, are the Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and a brief notice of his death in the Western Christian Advocate. My own personal acquaintance with the bishop commenced in Philadelphia, during the session of the Philadelphia Annual Conference, in April, 1816, a little prior to the session of the General Conference of that year, in Baltimore, May 1st.

He was admitted on trial as a traveling preacher, in the Baltimore Annual Conference, A. D. 1802, and appointed to the Carlisle circuit, in the state of Pennsylvania. A. D. 1803, he traveled on Montgomery circuit, Maryland. In 1804 he was admitted into full connection, ordained a deacon, and appointed to Frederick circuit, in the last-mentioned state. The ensuing year he was stationed on the Shenango circuit. The Baltimore Annual Conference held its session that year (1805) in Winchester, Virginia, at which the Rev. Henry Boehm was present, and, as he informed me, heard brother Roberts preach an excellent sermon on—"Let him that glorieth, glory in the Lord." Brother Boehm adds, that Bishop Asbury was so much pleased with this discourse, that it led him to take more especial notice of its author; that it had an influence on his subsequent appointments; and, to use brother Boehm's own words, "after which period our beloved brother rose as a burning and shining light into more public notice." He was ordained an elder in 1806, and appointed to Erie circuit, in the state of Pennsylvania. In 1807 he was stationed in the city of Pittsburgh, and in 1808 at West Wheeling, in Ohio. In 1809 he received an appointment to the city of Baltimore, and in 1810 to Fell's Point, now East Baltimore station. In 1811 and 1812 he labored in the District of Columbia, the former year in Alexandria, and the latter in Georgetown. In 1813 he was transferred to the Philadelphia Conference, and stationed in the city of Philadelphia, where he remained two years.

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* Since this discourse was delivered, a Life of Bishop Roberts has been published, to which the reader is referred for further and more specific information concerning him.—P. P. S.

In 1815 he was appointed presiding elder of the Schuylkill district, which included Philadelphia. This led to his being chosen president of the Philadelphia Annual Conference in April, 1816, as no bishop happened to be present. During the session of this conference a considerable number of delegates from the northern and eastern conferences, on their way to Baltimore, the seat of the General Conference, which commenced on the first day of May, 1816, arrived in Philadelphia, and for several days were present and witnessed the manner in which brother Roberts presided in the conference, with which they were generally pleased. This probably led to his election to the episcopal office, at the General Conference.

Being elected and ordained a bishop in 1816, he immediately entered upon the discharge of his episcopal duties. The first annual conference he attended in this character was held in this city, (New-York.) My acquaintance with him commenced at the Philadelphia Conference of that year; and being at my father's in New-Jersey, where he called, it became my privilege to accompany him to the city, and introduce him to a number of persons as Bishop Roberts. The repetition of the word bishop, however, was more than his modesty could endure, and he earnestly besought me to leave that great title in silence, and simply introduce him as brother Roberts. Having entered upon the discharge of the duties of his high office, he continued to discharge them with zeal, fidelity, and perseverance, as long as his health and strength would enable him to travel; and only consented the last summer to abandon his intention of visiting Texas, to attend the annual conference in that republic, at the earnest solicitation of one of his colleagues, and that of other friends, though at that time in ill health.

In the discharge of his duties as a bishop he had to travel throughout the United States; and as he located his family in Indiana, he traveled extensively in the west and south-west, where the country generally is new and the traveling difficult, and not unfrequently connected with coarse and hard fare: but he shrunk not at the prospect of difficulties and sufferings, nor neglected to go forward in his work because in its performance they had to be endured. This course, in all probability, was the principal cause of superinducing a premature old age.

When he was elected to the episcopal office his constitution appeared to be firm and vigorous, and he, though grave, was sprightly and active, and by no means of an aged appearance for his years. But, for several years past, he has carried the appearance of an old man, who was worn down with age and cares to an extent much greater than his years. Since his return home last summer he has been sinking under his infirmities, and rapidly tending toward the grave; till finally, on the twenty-seventh of March last, (1843,) at about one o'clock in the morning, he departed this life, at his residence at Lawrenceport, in Indiana, leaving the companion of his life, an aged and disconsolate widow, to mourn his departure. All we know of the circumstances attendant on his last illness and death is, that he suffered much to the end of his earthly course, but that in the midst of his sufferings his mind was in a happy frame. It was intended that his remains should be committed to the earth on the day after his decease, in a secluded spot on his own farm, which had previously been selected for this purpose by himself.

Bishop Roberts was not possessed of extraordinary powers of mind, or of extensive erudition; but he was a man of good common sense and solid information, especially in respect to theological and ecclesiastical subjects. It has been said of him, as was said of Barnabas, in Acts xi. 24, that "he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith; and [that through his instrumentality] much people was added unto the Lord."

The constitutional traits by which he was characterized, as far as I have been able to judge of them, were, frankness, modesty, and diffidence; and yet, though it was generally thrown upon the background, he had sufficient firmness to keep him steady to his purpose, and enable him to persevere in the discharge of his duty under the most trying circumstances. But his toils and sufferings are for ever at an end, and he rests from his labors in the paradise of God. Let us remember his Christian virtues, and study to imitate them. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

SERMON XXVI.

The Past and the Future, as surveyed by a Faithful Minister of Christ, at the Hour of Dissolution.[*]

BY REV. ISRAEL CHAMBERLAYNE,

OF THE GENESEE CONFERENCE.

"I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day."—2 Tim. iv, 6–8.

UNVARYING tradition, collated with the text and a variety of internal testimony, leaves no room to doubt, that, at the date of this epistle, the writer was in prison, and under the sentence of Nero Cæsar. That sentence was death. The text records the state of his feelings at that time, when the execution of his sentence was regarded as no less imminent than it was certain. Here, then, we have the experience of a true minister of Christ at the hour of dissolution, in the testimony of a good conscience, as to his past fidelity, and in the full assurance of hope, as to his future glorious reward.

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[*] This discourse was originally delivered before the Genesee Conference of ministers of the Methodist Episcopal Church, on the death of the late Rev. Seth Mattison, long a devoted and beloved member of that body. To adapt it to general purposes, besides a few passing verbal corrections, it is here merely abridged of those portions of it by which it stood connected with the above-stated occasion.

I. His past fidelity. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

This judgment of his past life, as a Christian and as a minister, was rendered in full view of the nearness of his approach to death, and to the tribunal of his Master. "I am now *ready* to be offered," appears to have no reference to his preparedness for death, considered with regard to the state of his soul. His allusion to the familiar details of a Jewish sacrifice renders it necessary to understand the *readiness* here asserted, as corresponding to the completeness of all the various preliminaries to the act by which the devoted victim was immolated. That this is the true exposition, is further obvious from the parallel in the following member of the sentence; in which, with a change of the figure, the same idea is more fully stated—"the time of my departure is *at hand*." Indeed, according to concurrent authority, a literal rendering, for "*ready to be offered*," would give, "*already poured out*." "I am already poured out." A martyr already in affection, he considers himself as a martyr already in fact. The thing itself so joyfully certain, and the time of it so joyfully near, he embraces it as a present good.

He regards his death as a sacrifice. This idea, though with more particularity of allusion, is equally presented in the *pouring out* of the more literal, as in the *offering* of the common translation. By the latter would be understood, the immolated victim itself; by the former, the libation, or liquid effusion, which, according to Hebrew practice, was poured upon it, subsequently to its immolation and the laying of it on the altar. Either way, the apostle considers himself as a sacrificial offering; though, by a strict adherence to his terms, he would be understood as exhibiting the gospel faith which he had proclaimed, as the sacrifice proper; and the blood of his martyrdom, as the libation poured over it, for the purpose of attesting and sealing its validity.

He speaks of his death as a "departure"—"My departure is at hand;" or, more literally, "The time of my departure has come." According to the true sense of this tropical language, the inspired author of it regarded himself as being distinguishable and severable from his animal organization. He well knew what would be the consequence to that organization, of the lictor's ax, and of chemical decomposition. A corruptible body, he knew it would lie powerless and insensible in the grasp of death through all those periods which had revolved before his prophetic ken in advance of the resurrection. But, for himself, he was under no apprehension of being arrested, and made a sharer in that long confinement. That the departure of the apostle implies something different from a going into the grave, is clear from the instances in which he employs the same forms of expression to the utter exclusion of that idea; as, where he declares his willingness to be absent from the body, that he might be present with the Lord; and his desire to depart and be with Christ, as far better than remaining in the body. Or, was even a Roman prison, with the privilege of continuing his epistolary labors, and holding communion with God, to be declined in favor of the utter inaction and unconsciousness of the grave? This exultation was kindled by the anticipation of no descent into the darkness of a temporary annihilation; but by the assured prospect of immediate entrance, through the sharpness of his final conflict, into the world of purified and happy spirits.

The judgment of the dying minister, formed under these circumstances, was, in a peculiar sense, his *own* judgment, matured under influences which precluded the slightest shade of fallacy.

No element of the former Pharisee is here; no inadequate perception of the spirit and extent of the law of God; no proud conceit of his own sufficiency to mete out the obedience which that law demanded. In Christ crucified for sin, he had seen at once its exceeding sinfulness, and that the thraldom of its guilt, and pollution, and power, could be dissolved by no human might whatever. In utter self-despair he had questioned earth and heaven—"*Who shall deliver me?*" And a voice responded—a voice which stirred his fainting spirit with a new life and a new energy responded—"*Jesus of Nazareth!*" And the body of death was exchanged for the spirit of life; the ashes on his brow, for the oil of gladness; and the manacles and groans of a captive, for the arms and shout of a conqueror.

But now, that the strife of the combat and the race is finished, does he look back on the foes he had vanquished, the competitors he had distanced, with the glow of a self-appropriating praise? "To me, who am the least of all saints, is this grace given." "My sufficiency is of God." "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross." Finally, hear him gasping in his last conflict: "Thanks be to God, who giveth me the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord."

This judgment of his past life by the apostle, as it was unmingled with *self*-complacency, so also was it uninfluenced by the favorable judgment of *others*. His pathway had led him through honor, as well as dishonor. Had he met the hiss, the taunt, the heavy lash, and the heavier missile? Had he been familiar with prisons? Had he been tossed into the Ephesian amphitheatre, and fought with the voracious tenants of the proconsular menagerie? Had maddened thousands shouted, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should *live?*" Thousands of other voices—Maltese and Lycaonian—had declared his *immortality;* had voted him the honors of *godhead.* But, passing all that, as unworthy of his dying thought, he had enjoyed, what every good man sets above all other earthly considerations, the confidence, the affection of the good. No mere man ever attracted, in equal measure, the reverent love and the loving reverence of all the wisest and best of the race. His praise, not the praise of a subaltern; but, next to the great Captain of our salvation, that of the prime leader of the armament of the King of kings, was in all the churches. In their eyes his scarred visage was honorable. To them, the wrinkles which care, more than time, had planted on his brow; the hairs that the same hand, rather than that of time, had thinned and whitened, would have been less illustrious if surmounted with the diadem of the Cæsars. The memory of all this was with him.

With this, also, there mingled other memories: his twofold vocation, as a Christian and as an apostle, with the super-earthly glory attending its utterance; the signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds, by which his high commission had been proved; his official success; the deserted shrines of the old idolatries, and the myriads turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God: all these memories rose before that mind which was throwing its searching glance into the past.

But, if he had said of labor and shame, and pain and death, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear to me, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus;" he had also placed every consideration of an opposite character, including, in a marked manner, his ancestral honors, and the distinctions won by personal effort, in the same category. He had even excluded them from the pale of respectable comparison; had stigmatized them by a climax of dishonorable simile: "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ: yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but *ὀκυϐϐαλα*—the vilest refuse, the merest excrement—that I may win Christ." Thus, even in life, he who had more than any other man to trust in for acceptance with God; more of what he had *been*, of what he *was*, and what he had *done* and *suffered;* thus, even in life, had he adjudged it all as utterly insufficient for that awful purpose.

What, then, could have inspired this arbitrament of a justifying conscience in view of his past life, when the shades of death were deepening those of his dungeon, and the severe light of eternity lay on the scenes of his future being? What, indeed, but that he was found in Christ, not having on his own righteousness, but the righteousness of God which was by faith in him; that Christ's merit had rendered his person and his works acceptable to God; while, at the same time, it had procured for, and assured to him, an eternity of abode in his own glorious presence?

Such being the circumstances under which this great minister formed his judgment, both with regard to the past and the future; let us, for a few moments, accompany him in his survey as well of the one as of the other.

With regard to the past, the auto-biographer says: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." Before entering into these different views of the subject, a remark seems proper which is applicable to them all. A pervading idea in this accumulation of metaphor is *preterition.* He had previously, as we have seen, anticipated his martyrdom by saying, "I am *al-*

ready poured out—the time of my departure *has come.*" What follows, then, expresses the idea of *completed* probationary action. This being taken as the governing idea; it will oblige us to exhibit every other as holding a subordinate relation to it. Thus: "My fight is finished; I have fought it through: my course is finished; I am already at the goal: and with regard to both of them—the combat and the race—they were conducted according to the prescribed conditions: those conditions are consummated also; I have kept the faith."

One more general remark: To the mind of a common believer, shut up to the near and certain prospect of the greatest physical calamity to which the human being is exposed in his present condition; to such a mind, the idea of that event acquires a magnitude of control to which every other sublunary consideration is subordinated; it is well if it throw no shadow on the scenes beyond. To such a mind, the *last* trial is the *great* one. And, as it presents itself so to him, it is so he naturally presents it to others. It tinges all he says, as it colors all he sees. To die!—If it is not everything to him, it is, at least, a great thing: *the one great thing.*

With the apostle all is different. He is not going into the grave. He is departing, indeed; but he is departing to be with Christ. The true difficulties of probation are already settled; and now, blessed be God! he has nothing to do but die. So small a matter does he account it, that it is the same to him as done already. More properly; he has come to the point where, in the order of natural events, death should have been; but he is not there. He writes of all that affected him; of all that he *found* there; but death is not so much as named. Instead of dying, he does two joyful things; pours out a thankful libation, and departs. Death had *been* there. Death, the conqueror, had been there; but, instead of him, he finds one who has already conquered the conqueror. His name is Victory. And, after looking around for his last enemy in vain, the departing saint exclaims: "Death is swallowed up in Victory."

But we must now return, with the apostle, to a survey of the expedients by which the grace of God had enabled him to achieve this high result. We quote him:—

1. "I have fought a good fight—that good fight." As all the remaining terms in the text, including this, are agonistic, they must, of course, be understood in the light of agonistic custom. A *good* fight, according to that custom, was an honorable one, as excluding, utterly, all who were base-born, or of infamous behavior, as well as any, however qualified, who might attempt to enter its lists without proper official sanction. To fight a good, that is, an *honorable* fight, according to the same original signification of the terms, was to bring it to a triumphant issue; as no other issue, consistently with that import, could be either good or honorable.

The combat of the veteran minister had been a good one, agreeably to all these definitions, and in such a sense of the qualifying word as could never admit of its application to any earthly contest whatever.

(1.) To qualify him with appropriate birth, he had been born again; begotten and born of God. To free him from any disqualification arising from personal conduct, the same power which had numbered him among the sons of God, had sanctified him in soul, body, and spirit.

(2.) Nor had he entered the arena of this high contest at his own instance, or, officially considered, on his own behalf; but on the motion and behalf of God. God had moved him to engage in it; not, mainly, for reasons that were personal to him who was moved; but for such as involved the character of the great Mover.

Earth, originally a fair colony of heaven, had been the subject of an irruption from the penal regions. The instigator of insurrection on the plains of heaven had succeeded in erecting the standard of revolt among the subjects of God on earth. All had submitted to it; all had sworn allegiance; all had armed to support it; and the government of the thrice holy, the just, and the good, was everywhere superseded by the reign of the fell usurper.

It was to expel this usurper, and re-assert his own gracious dominion over the sons of men, that the Word, which was God, had become flesh and dwelt among us. To this end he had died and risen. In pursuance of the same end he had also "ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, and receiving gifts for men; even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them." The inventory of this munificence to his rebellious subjects from the victorious Prince of peace, is headed by *apostles;* for, "when he ascended up on high, he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers:" or, as it is elsewhere stated, "God hath set some in the church; first apostles; secondarily prophets," and so of the rest.

In this first class of officers under the restored government of God, the subject of this inspired memoir stood conspicuous. As previously intimated, therefore, he was not self-ushered amid the elements of this great conflict for the recovery of the invaded rights of the Lord of the universe. For, whether he appealed to the devouring fire that invested Sinai, or to the mysterious fountain of Calvary, which alone can quench it, he did it with his finger on the broad seal of his divine commission.

(3.) The conflict, from which the illustrious subject of our notice was now retiring, had been a *good* one, in the above-stated sense, as it left him master of the hard-won field. He had been in every part of that field, as the shifting scenes of it called him; not to elude, but to meet its intensest heat, its darkest peril. Wherever the army of the aliens showed the most determined front, and was working the deadliest havoc, there was he. Wherever his young recruits staggered, or were driven back by some hellish onset; wherever a subaltern fled or fell, or a standard of his God was falling, there his voice was heard; there his arm smote; and there a double death was dealt by the sharp sword with two edges.

Thus did he maintain the conflict to the last. Was it not a good one—good, in the sense of honorable? As such, was he not entitled to look back upon it, especially now, that, with regard to him, that contest was finished, and anticipation, with so unfaltering a confidence, was giving him presage of everlasting victory?

The general scope of allusive description in this part of the text, and the extent to which we have already made a general application of it, leave but little more for your consideration under the present view of our subject. It is proper, however, that the conflict which, in the memory of it, ministered so greatly to the apostle's satisfaction in the near prospect of dissolution, should be surveyed, as doubtless he surveyed it, with reference to himself, *personally*, and as a *minister:* and,

1.) Personally, he had achieved a good combat. Wherever you date the commencement of his regenerated life; whether, in the low sense in which Peter, and James, and John, had been subjects of acceptable piety while followers of the Baptist, or even earlier; whether, in that low sense, you suppose that the disciple of Gamaliel, who declares that he had served God from his forefathers with a pure conscience, had also served him acceptably; and that, as in the case of the other apostles, his Christian calling was the mere development of the germ of his Jewish piety: or whether you suppose him to have lived in such disobedience to the light of his dispensation as a Jew, that he was a child of wrath till he became a Christian; certain it is, that, in becoming so, he became, in the strongest sense, "*a new creature.*" He who had believed in God before, now believed in Jesus; and the love of God in him became the absorbing, hallowing, all-controlling passion of his existence.

This new life was guarded, and the conditions of its ultimate perpetuity fulfilled, with a vigilance and labor that knew no moment of intermission. Here lay the great conflict of his life. Unprecedented public labor, with a copious baptism of the sufferings of his great Head, was not only no ground of repose from this conflict of the interior nature, but ministered constant admonition against indulgence. It inspired an unslumbering apprehension, lest the instincts imbedded in his animal constitution should assert their brute control. If others dream that a high office in the church, and the earnest and successful discharge of the duties of it, will insure, to the regenerated minister, the prize of the heavenly life, unconnected with the constant mortification of the fleshly appetites, he made the contrary inference. One apostle had fallen. "I, therefore, so fight, not as one that beateth the air; but I keep my body under, and bring it into subjection, lest that, by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway."

The more potent of his enemies, however, were not those which sought the destruction of the spirit through an insurrection of the animal passions. The accursed of God, the condemned spirits of the pit, were abroad. The perfect man, the man Christ Jesus, sustained by the omnipotence which was incarnate in him, had wrestled with these powers of evil; had wrestled to agony; had agonized even to blood. True, he had bruised their head; but they also had bruised his assumed nature, till his surcharge of suffering made him own, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even to death." These deposed and alien spirits are they who perform so conspicuous a part in the drama of that only real life which inspiration moves before us with all its scenes of mighty interest; scenes bright with everlasting day; dark as the shades of hell. How countless are they! If one single detachment, with orders relating to an obscure and passive individual, boasted itself a legion; how many such squadrons must hang on the movements of each who makes aggressive war against their leader! How many of them must he attract who waves one of the banners of the Lord's host!

But, next to the all-conquering Name, the name of the subject of this memoir was dreadful among the apostate powers. "*Jesus* I know; and *Paul* I know." Who, then, but the chivalry of hell must have been marshaled against him? Whose eye can gauge the depth of the dark circle which it drew around him? Who can count the number of its lifted spears? But he stands! The strife mingles; but he stands, *unconquered;* more than *unconquered*, he is *unconquerable;* more than *unconquerable*, he *conquers*. The armor that covers him makes him unconquerable; the arms he wields, and the might by which he wields them, make him conqueror; yea, more than conqueror. God of might! the armor, the arms, the strength, the victor, and the victory, are thine!

2.) But if the author and subject of our theme had waged a successful conflict against his personal enemies, as a Christian, he had acquitted himself no less honorably, as a Christian minister, against the great antagonists of that truth which he had been set to propagate and defend.

He had warred a good warfare against Judaism. Its pontiff and priests, its senators and doctors, were stung to madness by the declaration, that the perfection and end of its institution were only to be looked for in the doctrine of Him whom they had put to death, as the vilest of malefactors; that its hoary and pompous ritual should give place to a worship so simple, so purely spiritual, as would spurn alike the altar, the victim, the priest, the temple; that the law to which they were looking for justification denounced their utter condemnation, and shut them up in sin, the guilt of which could only be effaced by a repentant faith in Him whose murder they had instigated.

This declaration he justified in their synagogues and before their councils, by repeated appeals to his own personal knowledge of the fact—*the great central fact in Christianity*—that Jesus of Nazareth had survived the death of his crucifixion; and by citing the concurrent testimony of a multitude of other witnesses, who had conversed with him repeatedly and familiarly after his resurrection; who had seen his ascension; and, subsequently, on the most public occasions, attested their depositions by the utterance of numerous foreign languages, by the healing of every manner of disease, and the raising of the dead.

This was the doctrine, and these the facts, by which the converted Jew invaded the principalities of Judaism; led its captivity captive, and set in operation a train of influences by which, ultimately, its citadel was demolished for ever.

This doctrine, and the facts which constituted its perfect demonstration, armed him for the overthrow of Gentilism. He was a chosen vessel, chiefly for this purpose, to bear the Name that saves to the uttermost before the Gentiles; to carry the ensign of his cross to all nations, for their obedience to the faith. Hence his emphatic designation as the "*apostle of the Gentiles*."

Others were provincial in their labors; his were projected on a scale marked by no terrestrial limits. The voluptuous Asiatic; the polished Greek; the haughty Roman; the German citizen, and the German boor; the grave Spaniard; the garrulous Gaul; the aboriginal Briton, bibber alike of beer and blood; all heard the story of the cross, and, touched with the love of the Crucified, became his willing captives.

We have before seen the spoils won by his hand from the *obsolete* religion of his ancestors, and the train laid which issued in its ultimate explosion: here we witness the countless trophies wrested from a perniciously *false* one; while, at the same time, the elements were infused which, in due time, wrought its utter dissolution.

Such had been the *personal* and *official* conflict of this dying servant of the Lord.

Personally, the world, the flesh, had long been nailed to the cross. His infernal enemies had been baffled and overthrown in every encounter.

As a *minister*, he had endured hardness, and made full proof of his divine commission. The enemies of the truth had never found him off his guard. He had met and repelled their onsets. He had made reprisals; and countless and priceless were the spoils that graced his triumph. Need we ask your indulgence for the aspiration with which he enters that triumph?—"*I have fought a good fight.*"

2. "*I have finished my course.*" The apostle is distinguished, as a writer, for some peculiarities, which show him independent of what the *critics* call the rules of good writing. One of these, is the extent to which he pursues an idea suggested by some incidental word; especially when it chances to awaken any sacred or classic association. This *usus loquendi* leads him, after his first allusion to the *combat*, to carry it on to the *race;* and then, as everything he touches lives, he sees the *white lines* within which it must be performed: the same association presents the *brabeus*, or judge; nor is he willing to omit the verdant crown which he sees that presiding personage lay away for the fighter of the good fight, and the finisher of the race. The consequence of this extended and complicated metaphor is, that the same general idea is more than once presented. The apostle's life, as a Christian and a minister, had been exhibited under the notion of an arduous and long-drawn conflict. The race, which seizes on a different circumstance of Isthmian custom, adds beauty and light to the subject; but, still, the subject itself is the same. If this view of the matter is correct, you will expect me to pass it accordingly.

To an audience differently constituted, or to yourselves, brethren, under different circumstances, it might be allowable to enter into some detail touching the matter of this allusion. As it is, a single glance must suffice.

(1.) The first object that strikes you, is the "great cloud of *witnesses*." Vast flights of seats, extending far, and rising high above the theatre of the contest, and filled with dense masses of anxious spectators, to the number of several hundred thousand, would naturally raise, in an eastern imagination, the idea of a *cloud;* "a great cloud of witnesses."

(2.) Next is the *umpire* of the contest, who, from his high seat, is prepared to mark the various movements of the scene, and who displays the verdant *wreath* which is to honor the head of the successful competitor.

(3.) The *competitors* themselves enter the stadium. Trained for the trial by a long course of painful discipline, each, determined that nothing shall encumber the motion on which everything depends, has parted, not merely with the ornamental portions of his apparel; but, literally, with everything.

(4.) The *herald* lifts up his voice; proclaims the names of the candidates; the laws which are to govern them during the contest; and, finally, gives the signal.

(5.) The *strife* commences. The competitors do not so much run, as fly toward the goal. Every limb, every muscle, strains—labors. The effect is agony. The pusillanimous faint. One after another drops off. The rest are distanced. He who has patience for the pain, and strength for the labor, and speed for the flight, bears himself on till he gains the goal.

(6.) The heavens peal with the *applausive shouts* of the spectators. The *palm* he waves proclaims the victor. The *triumphal wreath* is his; but it is not presently bestowed. He sees it "*laid up*" for him. A short time suffices to prepare the *feast;* at which the victor in the race, with all who have won in the various other exercises, is conspicuously seated. The *judge* closes the imposing ceremonial by an *open proclamation of their respective merits, and by placing on their heads the honors they have respectively achieved.*

The application of these matters, as far as they are applicable to the apostle's case, is self-suggested. He entered his *course*, as a Christian and as a minister. He saw the *judge*. He saw the *crown*. He surveyed the *witnesses*. He listened to the *conditions*, and sacrificed everything to their fulfillment. He heard the *signal*, and threw all his energies of soul and body into the conflict. It is over. "*I have finished my course.*"

3. "*I have kept the faith*—I have maintained the true doctrines of Christ." Or, which seems more likely to be the author's meaning, "I have kept the faith, in the sense of *obeying* it." Thus understood, the phrase, instead of dropping the metaphor, sustains it: thus, "I have finished both the combat and the race, in accordance with the published conditions. In regard to my course, especially; I made my outset by incurring the loss of all things. I kept within the lateral lines;* love to *God*, on the one hand, leading me to consult his will and seek his glory as the rule and end of my every action; love to *man*, on the other, engaging me to sacrifice wealth and ease, and friends and fame, and to labor with travail night and day, that they might be saved. Patient of protracted suffering, and far from reposing from it for a single moment, as if nothing had *been* done while anything remained to *be* done, I left the things that were behind, and pressed on, reached forward, to the mark for the prize of my high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Such were the conditions of my high probation. I look back on them with satisfaction. They are fulfilled. *I have kept the faith.*"

With him we turn from the survey of his past fidelity, to

II. THE PROSPECT OF HIS FUTURE GLORIOUS REWARD.

If the past moves him to exultation, the future enkindles ecstasy. The one awakens in his dungeon the approving voice of conscience; the other irradiates it with beams from his promised diadem and the face of God. Language has no adequate signs for such glorious things; but, with such as he can command, he characterizes the image that has taken possession of his soul. His period rises:—"*Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.*" The imagery is still Isthmian; only, to bring it up to his subject, he displaces the mere brabeus of the figure, by the *Lord, the righteous Judge;* and the crown of *oak* or *olive* leaves, gives place to a *crown of righteousness,* unfading and endless.

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* "*Lateral lines;*" that is, white lines on the right and left, within which the athletæ were to keep themselves till the race was concluded. "*I have kept the faith,*" is considered as an allusion to this circumstance.

Two things are understood and taught here, with regard to the future reward of the saints: first, the *nature;* and secondly, the *time* of it.

1. As to the nature of it, it is a reward of righteousness. Righteousness, as a general term, expresses the idea of moral perfection. Understood with regard to man, it signifies his conformity to divine requirement, in the holiness of his affections and conduct. The crown of righteousness has been explained by some, as representing, merely, the glory and bliss with which the consummated holiness of the believer will invest and inspire him in the future state. According to this, holiness, and sin also by an obvious consequence, would involve their own proper reward and punishment. Then, waiving other consequences, the public judgment could have no object beyond the exhibition of a *fact,* equally known without such a judgment as with it, namely, that holiness produces happiness, and *vice versa.* This, besides an utter disappointment of human expectation, based on the common-sense interpretation of the juridical language of the Bible on this subject, would falsify such declarations as these: "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you, and rest to you who are troubled, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints—in that day." The possession and enjoyment of holiness, therefore, cannot constitute the proper reward of the saints, any more than the consciousness of the Olympic wrestler, that he had lawfully mastered his antagonist, could justly be conceded to him in place of the promised prize by which his painful efforts had been animated. Holiness, even now, lifts up the apostle's head with joy; but the crown of righteousness, though hovering over, has not yet descended on it.

Holiness, by the constitution of its ever-blessed Author, produces happiness under all external circumstances, in-differently; among the friends, or the enemies of God; in physical ease, or suffering; in the body, or out of it; among the sons of earth, or the sons of heaven. But, while holiness does this, it constitutes the mere meetness for future reward. The reward itself is a valuable consideration, not naturally belonging to it, as an effect to its cause; but appended to it by the positive act of God. That act will confer the following, among, perhaps, other immunities and privileges, neither of which, it will be perceived, would result from holiness, by any causing influence in the thing itself.

(1.) Physical reorganization on principles excluding for ever all kindred, that is, physical, disorders introduced by sin.

(2.) Perfect and everlasting security against defection from moral rectitude.

(3.) Everlasting exclusion from the presence of all impure beings and influences.

(4.) Incorporation in the scheme of an endlessly pure and happy society; the society of saints and angels.

(5.) Restrainless access to the immeasurable theatre on which Jehovah, through the medium of his works, will unfold his glorious perfections for ever.

(6.) And, above all, a near and intense gaze on the unveiled face of God incarnate, in whom all the Father's and the Spirit's glory will shine for ever; a gaze which, by a rapid process, will assimilate the subject to the object, in soul and body, through everlasting ages.

The righteousness which gives character to this reward, is so denominated in view of three great facts.

The first, is, the perfect equivalent which the sacrifice of Christ presents to divine justice, not only for the perfect forgiveness and the perfect holiness of all who believe in him; but for the glorification of all their souls and bodies in heaven, for ever and ever.

The second consideration to which the term refers, is, the moral adaptation to endless happiness, of which the infused holiness of God possesses the believer. The holiness is the holiness of God; the happiness is the happiness of God. Eternal fitness demands their connection.

The third fact embodied in the divine economy, in sight of which future reward is called a crown of righteousness, is, that the truth of God binds him to the bestowment of it. God could not be righteous if he were not true. The righteousness of God is often, and here in the text especially, put for that veracity which constitutes an essential part of it. When Jehovah promises, his righteousness, taking the form of truth, or faithfulness, demands performance. But he has promised everlasting glory to them that believe; the communication of that glory, therefore, is due, not so much from him to them, as from him to himself. That glory, then, is the crown which *his righteousness—his truth; his immutable faithfulness; all his infinite perfections*—will require him to give the obedient believer at that day.

With these few remarks on the *nature* of the glorious reward, let us fix our eye for a few moments,

2. On the *time* of it: "*That day.*" This refers, as we shall consider a little hereafter, to the time of the appearing of the righteous Judge, and the institution of the general judgment; immediately and indispensably previous to which will be the resurrection of the *body.*

What becomes of the *soul,* in the mean time? St. Paul has been disembodied nearly eighteen centuries. Where is he? Where are the recent, where the ancient dead; the dead in the Lord? How do they pass the intermediate *time?* What is the intermediate *state?*

It must be confessed that, as if it were a matter of comparative insignificance, inspiration has left a dimness about this whole subject. It sheds no dubious light on the form of the life beginning at the resurrection. Apostles, martyrs and confessors, sustained themselves under all their sufferings by a fixed gaze on that great era. On the object of our present inquiry they bestowed an occasional glance, indeed; but, after all, it is left to us, so that, like the spirit that appeared to Eliphaz, we cannot discern the form thereof. A general reason for this must be, that it is an object that involves only a temporary, and not the eternal interest of man.

But the soul survives its body. Centuries after the deaths of the three great patriarchs, a voice from the burning bush said, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." If Abraham and the rest were not then existing, the God of truth could not have asserted, as he does here, an existing relation between himself and them: he could only have said, I *was* the God of Abraham. If Abraham did not then exist, God declared himself the God—of nobody—of nothing. But, as our Saviour argues, he is not the God of the dead, but of the living; but he is Abraham's God; therefore Abraham lives.

The disciples of our Lord, as the Jews generally, believed in the existence of "angels and spirits;" that is, human spirits, as well as angels. Our Saviour was so far from correcting that general impression, that he countenanced it in the most unquestionable manner. Passing other instances, fix your attention here: the risen Redeemer suddenly enters the assembly of his followers; they are terrified and affrighted, supposing him a spirit. I need not ask, what common, to say nothing of *divine* compassion, would have led him to do with the matter of such a fear, admitting it had been groundless. How does he treat it? "Handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have."

He was not then a disembodied spirit; but he had been; and, as such, had fulfilled his appointment to meet the supplicating thief in paradise; as such, also, though he did not permanently remain there, he had visited hades, whether regarded as identical with paradise or not.*

The discourse of the rich man and the beggar is decisive, whether you call it a narrative or a parable. If a narrative, there *can* be no question; if a parable, there *should* be none. The imagery of our Saviour's parables is derived, not from fancied, but real life. There is absolutely no invented material in one of them. It were easy to justify this proposition by analysis. For the present we shall rest the matter here. The account in question is either a *narrative* of *facts*, or an *allusion* to *facts*. On either supposition it results, most undeniably, that the spirits of good and evil men pass, immediately after death, into another state of conscious existence.

If spirit were inseparable from its present corporeal organization, why did the first of Christian martyrs ask the Lord Jesus to receive his spirit?

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* Hades, in strictness of construction, is a genus; of which tartarus with gehenna, on the one hand, and paradise with Abraham's bosom, on the other, are species.

If the soul can only be present with the Lord in connection with the body, what led the author of our text to depend on *absence* from the body as a means of obtaining that object? What made him speak of becoming *absent* from the body, *at all*, if he and his body were to be blended in a common unconsciousness till revivified in the resurrection? If he knew that he could never leave his body, why does he talk of *departing* from it, and of being *with Christ*, as the consequence? According to this supposition, he was aware that, after death, he would *know* nothing, *enjoy* nothing, *do* nothing, for many ages; and yet affirmed, "For me, to die is *gain*, and *far better* than living in the body;" that is, than living to serve Christ, and rejoice in him evermore with joy unspeakable and full of glory. The supposition carries a heavy load of other absurdities. These, however, have more than weight enough to sink it to the centre of its native abyss. Let its descent be swift, and followed by no resurrection! "He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die;" he shall not only not *finally* die, but he shall not die during *any* time; he shall *never* die.

To this extent the testimony is explicit. The disembodied human soul of Jesus lived. The soul of the apostle; the souls of all the saints, *all* souls, live in the same manner; that is, separated from the terrestrial body. Whether *dis*embodied spirits, however, are *un*embodied; whether in a state of abstract spirituality, or provided, for the time, with organizations of attenuated matter, is a point not so easy of determination. Nor, happily for us, though deeply interesting as an object of philosophical inquiry, is it a point in theology on which any practical consequences depend.

The same remark, though with considerable abatement, may be made as to the *ubi*, the *where*, of spirits separated from the body. We know that the *sheol* of the Hebrew, and the *hades* of the Greek Scriptures, express the idea of the *place* of departed souls. But where that is, or what the physical and intellectual condition of those inhabiting its obscure regions, are questions to which those Scriptures give no direct response.

Their moral state is left in less, I may say, no uncertainty. The impure are attended, more or less, by a consciousness of their impurity, and the hopelessness of emerging from their dreary prison. The holy are sensible of God's favor; and the *holiest*, at least, are, in a vastly more blissful sense than ever they had been in the body, "present with the Lord."

The *time* will be long or short to them, mainly, as they are connected, or unconnected, by material organizations of their own, with the machinery of the universe, whose varied, but equable motions, form the standard by which all our impressions on this subject are governed. Withdrawn from the material universe, the mind could have no other notices, as to the movement of time, than those furnished by the succession of ideas in the mind itself. So that, were that succession *rapid*, time would be *long;* if the mental changes were *few*, time would be *short;* and if the mind were held precisely in the *same state*, time would have *no motion*. The whole period, intermediate to death and the resurrection, would be an *indivisible moment*.

It is manifest that absolute, is different from apparent time; God's from ours. For "a thousand years," by our standard, are but "one day," according to his. Whether separate spirits measure their duration by his rule or ours, or some other different from both, must depend on the relations they hold to the two worlds of matter and mind; relations which we must die to know.

One deduction we think may be made with perfect safety; and that is, that, however advanced their happiness beyond that of the mortal condition, theirs is a state of *privation*, considered with regard to the result of the next great change to which they are tending. That result will take in the release of their bodies from the grave, and their souls from hades; for "death and hades shall deliver up the dead which are in them." Then cometh the end; when the Lord Jesus, having saved his people from all the consequences of the fall, shall perform the last great act which closes his mediatorial government, by presenting them faultless before his Father's face; perfectly worthy through his righteousness; perfectly worthy through his nature imparted to them, of being made partakers of his everlasting glory.

He shall give it to "me at *that day*." This is one of the frequent instances in which the inspired writers employ the ellipsis; a form of expression in which something necessary to the sense is left to be supplied by the reader. Two cases in which the same phrase, employed in the same connection, is elliptical by our author, it may be pertinent to cite: "He is able to keep that which I have committed to him to *that day*." "The Lord grant that Onesiphorus may obtain mercy in *that day*." In the text, however, nothing more is necessary in supplying the deficient thought, than to bring back into the text, what is matter of immediate statement in the following context: "*And not to me only, but to all them also that love his appearing*." This understood, the sense of the text is: the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give to me a crown of righteousness in that day *of his appearing*.

This "appearing," as is shown by the judicial designation of the divine person who is the subject of it, is to be for specifically judicial purposes. What those purposes are, the author of our text has elsewhere stated, with a clearness which precludes the necessity of quoting other authorities on the subject: "It is appointed to men once to die, and after this the judgment—*is appointed to men*." "Because God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness." "The Lord Jesus Christ shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing."

This last declaration associates one fact with that "appearing" of Christ, to which all the others refer, which fixes the common application, beyond the possibility of doubt, not to any *antecedent, metaphorical* appearing of Christ; but to his *last personal* appearing. He shall *appear*. He shall appear for *judgment*. Of that judgment, the *quick* and the *dead* shall be the subjects. He "shall judge the *quick* and the *dead* at his *appearing*." St. Peter has said, "He is ready to judge the *quick* and the *dead;*" that is, the *living* and the *dead;* the last of the living generations of mankind, together with all the generations of the dead. The latter, all the saints certainly, are to hear the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, and, in order of time, rise first. Immediately upon which, the quick, that is, the *living*, will feel the pulse of immortality, and ascend with them to the place of judgment. "For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep"—shall not *come before* them, as the subjects of the great change from mortality to immortality—"for the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain"—being "changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye—shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." This is the day to which the fear and hatred, the hope and love, of the holy and the unholy, have been looking forward in all ages: "the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." Then "the chief Shepherd shall appear;" the Pastor of the pastors; from whom those who have been ensamples to the flock shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

That there are *secret* reasons, connected with the complicated interests of God's government, for putting down the final judgment to the last day in the calendar of time, is more than probable. Some of the reasons for it, however, are necessarily *obvious.*

One great reason, involving many others, lies in the scale of that probation from which infinite Wisdom determined that all created intelligences, angels and men at least, should ascend to confirmed purity and bliss, if obedient; or sink, if disobedient, to confirmed impurity and wo. Such a probation, from its very nature, looks toward a future retribution; as retribution necessarily looks back upon the conduct of probation.

A holy order of intelligences, of heavenly origin, have had a probationary period; as is evinced by the historic fact, that some of them "kept not their first estate." Whether the conduct of this order of beings was the subject of a public investigation before or after the delinquent were cast down to tartarus, or not, we have no information. If it was; I speak now of the latter class; if it was, and their sentence involved all the penalty to which they were *then* liable, it follows that they were probationers afterward, or that, after they ceased to be so, they were nevertheless under responsibility for their conduct; for inspiration declares them subject to the coming judgment, and that they are foreboding the worst of consequences from it; consequences personal to themselves. They "are reserved in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day." Whether they will be judged and punished on grounds involving no revision of their former sentence, or reference to transactions lying behind that event, or otherwise, it is certain that they have officiously and malignantly intermeddled with human interests; and there ought to be no doubt that this will constitute an important ground, if not the only one, on which they will be amenable to the common judgment; while, at the same time, it enters among the other reasons for the judgment itself, and for the fixing of it at that period when the history of man's responsible conduct, with which they have voluntarily united their own, shall finally close. If the state prisoner, under lighter punishment for his first capital offense, escape from durance, and wrap a loyal province in the flames of a hellish mutiny, reasons of state demand that he be re-arrested; that his trial should be as public as his bad example, and that his new punishment should be commensurate with his new crimes.

Our race is upon probation. The original terms of it have been violated; but, as redemption supervenes upon that event, the consequence is, that a new trial is vouchsafed us on terms adapted to all its peculiarities. So much of the original penalty as demands physical dissolution is unabated, for reasons of present restraint and of ultimate advantage. On our part this condition is involuntary. Others are voluntary. *These* are to be performed; *that*, suffered. Both must operate till the remedial scheme, to which both are essential, shall have wrought its ultimate purpose, which cannot be till all probation closes.

Man, *as* man, cannot answer for his conduct till after his physical restoration. Man is an amalgam of matter and spirit. *Spirit* is not man, any more than *matter* is man. Both are intimately blended, and the *product* is man. A being otherwise constituted, could not have been the subject of his original relation to his Maker. Otherwise constituted, he could sustain none of his present relations. The laws of human mind, and all its operations, derive their peculiar characteristics from corporeal connection. Thrown off from that connection, whatever might, or might not follow, it would not be what it is: it would not be man.

It was man, *proper* man, whom God created in his own adorable image. It was the *compound* being that sinned, and let in death. It was man, *proper* man, that died, and rose, and ascended the throne of Divinity. His soul and body were both offered up for the redemption of our souls and bodies. It is this *blended* being who sins, repents, believes, is converted, sanctified; who labors, suffers, dies. And, blessed be God! it is the same man, the *concrete* man, that rises. It is man, every man that shall give account of himself to God; and, by consequence, must undergo the restoring process provided for in the promised resurrection. His relations *indicate* this; we might almost say, *prove* it.

The close of time, co-terminal as it will be, as well with the period of human probation, as with that of the mediatorial government of his Son, cannot but constitute such an epoch in the annals of Jehovah's administration, as to render it most eligible for this great judicial proceeding.

But his own absolute determination of this point shuts out all question; for "he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness." That day, as we have seen, will be neither *before* nor *after*, much less, *long* before, or *long* after the close of time; but at that point where time melts into eternity. It will not be *after;* for, while it will awake the dead, it will overtake the *living.* It will not be *before;* for, while it will overtake the living, it will awake the *dead.* It will be at that point upon which the living and the dead will rally; upon which the tides of finite and infinite ages rush.

That is the day that unfolds the scene of judgment; a scene that borrows no light from the vivid conflagration of earth and heaven. It will bring its own light; a light from which the earth and the heavens shall vanish. That is the day that sees the judgment throne, and Him that sitteth thereon; that sees the dead, small and great, stand before God; sees the opening of the book of life and the book of death; hears the names that are written therein; listens to their sentence; looks upon the gloomy procession of the condemned on their dark way to the mansions of the second death; sees the coronation of the heirs of heaven;

hears the coronation hymn; sees the flash of light from the opened portal of the eternal city, and the triumphal entry of the crowned nation of priests and kings, heralded with songs and shouts, and led on by the chariot of the King of kings, and all his attendant chariots, which are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels.

Such, venerable brethren, was the past, and such the future, as they presented themselves to this faithful minister of the Lord Jesus, at the hour of his departure. The past pours its cheering light upon the present; the future pours its radiance on it also; both reflow the past; reflow the present; and send the stream of their united effulgence on through the everlasting future.

Such be the hour of our departure. And thus, when that inevitable hour shall overtake us, may the past and the future unfold themselves to us! Amen.

SERMON XXVII.

The Wesleyan Reformation.

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"I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant: for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands."—Gen. xxxii, 10.

THIS language is from the lips of the patriarch Jacob. He had served his time with Laban, his maternal uncle, and was returning with wealth and glory to the land of his fathers. His route led him near the north of Edom the country of his brother Esau. Being reasonably suspicious of the attachment of that brother, whom he had formerly supplanted, on reaching the borders of Edom he divided his flocks and attendants into two divisions; presuming by this means to save himself from utter extinction, should the wrath of his kinsman remain unabated. Sending large presents before him to appease the vengeance of his rival, he himself lingered in the rear of the company, to invoke the interposition of Heaven by prayer and supplication. The language of the text is a part of his recorded devotions.

The feelings of the good patriarch may be more easily imagined than described. He had been twenty years from home. His success in a distant country had been the wonder of his new friends. It would be natural in Esau, who had had occasion for jealousy, and whose temper was probably less balanced than his brother's, to retain some unpleasant emotions. But the frankness and confidence of Jacob, in laying open to him his entire life and successes, perfectly removed or allayed them. With a generosity, which the founder of Idumea perhaps never wanted, as soon as he saw the force of his most fortunate brother, he ran to meet him, and, in the words of the inspired narrative, "embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." And the two brothers wept.

It would be difficult to decide which of the two deserved most for his conduct. Esau, with his four hundred men, perhaps warriors, could have taken summary vengeance for the loss of his birthright. Jacob, who might have entered Palestine at a point higher up, and thus avoided the danger, had the magnanimity to manifest a confidence little to be expected and seldom witnessed on such occasions. They proved by their mutual dignity of bearing, that the blood of a noble parent, at that moment coursing more proudly than ever in their veins, was a birthright which neither could relinquish.

From the past we turn our attention to the present. Let that scene be the type of another. As the old Jewish father, by the inheritance of the Abrahamic faith, became the head of the spiritual, not less than of the real, Israel; so, like him, Christianity has met with frequent occasions for giving to the world an account of its wonderful successes. Although prosperity in the church is always to be traced, in the last analysis, to the influences of the Holy Spirit, yet it is both Scriptural and consistent to speak of the secondary causes employed to produce it. And since, not only such distinguished men as Hume, Gibbon, and others, have attacked Christianity with some show of argument, on the side of these visible causes, but ordinary people are now every day thinking, if not reading, the very same things so sophistically uttered by their superiors; it may seem proper for the friends of true religion to call public attention occasionally to this subject. But each branch of the Christian church can do this most effectually for itself. At this time, therefore, we shall speak for ourselves and our doctrine. The text shall fall from the lips of the patriarch of Methodism, who, though long since gathered to his fathers, speaks through his descendants with a voice to be silenced only by the rejoicings of the millennium.

Whether the speaker possesses the moral qualifications to do this work with suitable impartiality and candor; or whether the age in which we live is prepared rightly to receive and profit by such efforts, are questions to be determined chiefly by the degree of heavenly charity resting upon the parties. As we shall endeavor not to trespass on the rules of courtesy, nor go further in our freedom than he whom we have chosen as our model, we expect to be met with the same magnanimous charity which we have seen manifested on a more invidious occasion. While we are speaking and hearing, may the sweet influences of our holy religion, and all the light and love of the holy gospel, surround and pervade us!

I. THE FIRST GREAT SECONDARY CAUSE OF THE RAPID PROGRESS OF THE WESLEYAN REFORMATION WAS THE MEANS EMPLOYED IN ITS PROPAGATION. THE BODY OF MEN WHO BEGAN AND PROMOTED IT WAS OF THE RIGHT COMPOSITION AND CHARACTER.

There are three general methods of establishing new opinions. The one, presuming on the influence of birth, education, and position, employs, as its only instruments, men of the highest consideration with the public. The second, distrusting the capability, perhaps the sincerity, of men in so many ways liable to be swayed by the prejudices of study, habit, and powerful connections, makes use of persons in the lowest walks of life, whose characters have at least the plastic virtue of being susceptible of any shape required by their office. The third and last, desirous of making the entire public its tribunal, takes its servants indiscriminately from all the orders of society, and as near as possible according to their respective civilization and numbers.

Each of these methods has its good features. The first is certain to acquire the respect of the higher classes; but it is also equally calculated to rouse the hereditary jealousies of the lower. From the earliest ages—from, and long prior to, the days of Greece and Rome—the plebeian has dreaded the insidious movements of the patrician. The prejudice is inherent in his position; and his suspicions, so universally felt and acknowledged, have obtained, in a variety of forms, at once the triteness and validity of a proverb:—

"Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes!"

The second, by encouraging new men to stand up as public instructors, though it may secure the attention of those not led by the authority of names and reputation, is liable, oftentimes, to awaken the levity of the lower, while it is sure to call down the sovereign contempt of the higher, classes. Common minds, shut up by jealousy against their superiors, by envy are more perfectly sealed against the unseconded and unguided efforts of their equals. The third method, being a combination, includes the virtues, while it neutralizes the bad tendencies, of the two former. No class of men can possibly object to it. Each one has its representative in it. It has enough of common life to reach and control the sympathies of the masses; and there is in it just enough of sound, sterling intellect, to give it that stability and discretion so much esteemed by the few thoughtful and well-educated people.

This was the method of Mr. Wesley. The new theology, taking its origin in the halls of the most aristocratic university in the world, and at first supported only by men bred up in the schools, ran the risk of imbibing a spirit too far above the reach of ordinary men. This may sound strange to some ears. But it is historically true; and had the young reformers, with nothing but real learning and the starch of a college life to recommend them, gone forth on their mission, they might have obtained the ear of a portion of the aristocracy to their speculations, but could never have touched the warm heart of a single poor man in his cabin. Their leader had the sagacity to foresee this embarrassment. From several facts it would appear, that, prior to all compulsion, he had meditated a plan by which he might have made himself one with the great body of his nation. But divine Providence would not permit him to undertake it with no better than the ordinary prospect of succeeding. A fierce persecution rose against him. The pulpits of his own church were closed and guarded. He was driven to the fields and commons, to the highways and hedges, where he met the thousands, indignant at such severities, and grateful in advance for coming favors. As his field of usefulness expanded beyond his means of supplying it with the few educated men at his command, he was forced to seek assistants among the only class of his countrymen which persecution and bigotry had left him.

In this manner originated the great leading cause of the wonderful success of the Wesleyan reform. The two extremes of character and talent were united. They included, also, occasional specimens of all the grades of intellect between them. On the one hand, you might see men endowed with the largest capacities, enriched by all the power and grace of learning—members and fellows of the universities, scholars of the highest titles and reputation, poets of rare and sterling genius, gentlemen and ladies of the proudest circles. On the other hand, you behold a mixed company of no rank or worldly honor. Accustomed to toil and hardships, no labor is too much for them. Sensible of their position in such society, they are willing to follow any wise and judicious plan of efforts. The salvation of immortal souls is their only object. In a word, you now see those days emulated, when Paul the rabbi, and Peter the fisherman, uniting in their characters the extremes of society in the age of Jesus, made the world resonant with the echo of their doctrines!

II. THE SECOND IMMEDIATE CAUSE OF PROSPERITY TO THIS GREAT ENTERPRISE IS TO BE FOUND IN THE OBJECT ON WHICH ITS ENERGIES WERE CHIEFLY EXERTED.

This was, by the good providence of God, the bulk and body of the people.

The entire superstructure of society is based on the lower classes. From these come always the ruling spirits of a people. It is a legal fiction, and as false as it is fictitious, that the higher orders rule and support the lower.

The reverse is exactly true. In a monarchy, even, power does not come from the king and proceed downward. It begins with the many and goes upward. The prince, however absolute, gets his authority originally from his subjects. When they speak, he must listen. It is only because they speak not, that he ever is despotic. But silence is the consent of nations.

But kings and rulers have, after all, but very little to do, in this age, with shaping the universal destiny of a people. They represent them only in one great capacity. They are the will imbodied of the millions, acting in their stead for stated purposes. Under every constitutional government, those purposes are very limited. But who are the great movers? Go to your cities, towns, hamlets—visit a single gathering of the citizens—then answer. Who write the books, preach the sermons, edit the periodicals, make the speeches, instruct the youth, and thus create the public sentiment of an empire? Least of all, the individuals of high birth and fortune. When the condition of a country, or an age, becomes corrupt and desperate, what men produce lasting and useful revolutions? From what rank in life do they chiefly come? Who have been the Tells and Washingtons of all ages? And in the church, who was Vigilantius? Who were Huss and Jerome? Who was the immortal Luther? Who, in early life, was the incomparable Cranmer? And who was our own Wesley? Whence came these men? Were they the sons of noblemen and princes? Had they been, they could have done but little. But it was impossible they should be. To suffer what they did, required sympathy with the multitude. The Saviour himself could not do his work, till he had formed in his own nature a bond of connection with humanity. Not only all the higher orders of society, and all the power, but also the ruling geniuses, come from below. Those to-day in a cabin, to-morrow may sit in king's houses. To whatever point we turn, we shall find, after all, that the head of society is always carried by the feet and shoulders. Sound philosophy, therefore, would have designated the very course actually pursued by our fathers.

But let us be instructed further on this subject by their example. Let us imagine an original itinerant approaching the centre of some populous district. No appointment has been made and duly published in the papers. But the probable course of his travel is industriously and accurately conjectured. Days before his arrival, the news of his coming has spread like a proclamation through the country. Now, amidst a vast throng of both sexes, he passes along the road or street, and stops in a public market. He rises. The eyes of all are on him. They are now to hear for themselves the persecuted FRIEND of the common people. The preacher knows his auditory. He speaks as to an honest, but unlettered, people. He is himself honest and unlettered. Every word is understood and treasured. As he progresses, his spirit warms with the object of his mission. Words flow faster and faster. The passion rises higher and higher. The intellect of the audience has been captured by good, sound reasoning. The heart and conscience have been touched by the power and importance of the subject. The sympathies of every one belonged in advance to the ill-treated stranger. Now he begins to sway the vast throng as he pleases. Like a troubled ocean, it swells and falls obedient to his object. Heaven, earth, hell, are opened to their vision. Just as the tempest of eloquence is about to break in all its power and glory on them, the preacher pauses, assumes a gentle manner, warns and entreats his hearers—with his raised finger pointed upward—and then sits down, master, guide, instructor, of a large portion of his weeping auditory for the remainder of his life! Having provided as he could for their future welfare, he goes on his way rejoicing, to repeat his triumphs in other places.

Now; what other auditory could have received this work? What bishop, what celebrated orator, what court favorite, could have so reached and ruled his brilliant congregation? The archbishop of Canterbury could not have done it. At his regular visitation, it is true, the doors of the cathedral are wide open. The mighty bell, from the heart of a populous city, announces his coming and his presence to a square league of crowded territory. The day, the hour, arrives, and the grandees are out. Coaches, with liveried servants, hurry back and forward. The concourse thickens. A shout is made. The king's chariot is coming! The royal household enters. The nobility of a kingdom is within; a poor, ignorant, friendless, famishing multitude is without. The great organ peals its classic strains. The reading, the bowing, the pomp, the ceremony of a religious fete begin. A brief, well-written, it may be an eloquent, address is made. A thousand lords and ladies are thinking over the latest gossip of the court; and a few genuine statesmen may be revolving the more serious concerns of state. The organ peals again—a moment more, and all—all is over. But whose soul is saved? What new truth has taken root? What impetus has been given to the cause of humanity and of God? What good has been done? We answer, Perhaps none at all; and we fear that too often the emptied temple would echo to us—none at all! And had the founder of Methodism taken this course to reform the world, though he might have reached the loftiest station in the church, he would have lived and died comparatively unknown. His life, like the life of several of his persecutors, might have been written in a single line—"Archbishop Wesley preached to the court on such and such a day!"

Society is a grand pyramid. The so-called lower orders, the toiling millions, are at the bottom; the chief spirit, whether king, prince, or president, or it may be some orator, author, or transcendent scholar, at the top. Between these are the various intermediate sections into which mankind have been divided. Each superior is supported by its next inferior, and all by the broad and powerful base.

Now, if this splendid structure, this pyramid of men, gets ruinous, falls down and requires rebuilding, what is the natural method to be pursued in doing it? Shall we begin with the apex, trusting to that to carry the work of reconstruction downward? Does the apex support, or is it only supported? Or if we wish to build one with new materials, what is the method? Do we not begin it at the bottom? What architect, what philosopher—rather, what child, would give us any other answer? And this is not a law of art, but of necessity, of nature. No superior portion can have support, consequently existence, till all below it is properly built up. All motion, all labor, all improvement, is from the lower to the higher. This was the Wesleyan method of procedure. Our work began down in the dirt and darkness. It is now quite above the middle.

It is yet going upward. It will continue to go upward, until it is completed. Nothing on the earth, or under the earth, can stop it. Two millions of men—men not particularly dainty of a little labor—intend to see the top stone laid on with shoutings. The stability of the Wesleyan pyramid will be derived from the materials used in its construction.

And what are those materials? Whatever else may be said, we have not committed the error of many of our predecessors. We have not, like the Christians of other ages, by spending all our efforts on the learned and noble, swept into our communion a class of men above all others most likely to retain impregnably the prejudices of their education. We have no Gnostics, who cannot forget the specious glitter of oriental learning. We have brought in no philosophers, intolerant of everything that does not square with the classic fictions of Rome and Athens. We have bowed to no scholastic jargon, that strives to put Christianity itself into the straight jacket of human logic. In a word, in the construction of our glorious fabric, we have made no attempts to demolish others, and thus build up with other men's materials. We have visited no ruins, we have rifled no fallen temples, to get here and there a polished block, or a beautiful column, or a slab of variegated mosaic, to adorn, while it might disfigure and weaken, our solid structure. Our artists have been troubled with no such unmanageable matter. They went, hammer and drill in hand, to the native quarry. They blew up the massive beams of rock by the power of their own enginery. Every foot of it has been cut, and squared, and fitted by themselves, and according to the original pattern. The work now shows itself, as far as it has gone up, one single mass of granite. The polishers have begun to scour and smooth the surface. They are following up the men of rock and mortar. The last stone is destined to be laid. The hand of the burnisher will yet reach the apex. Then our work of centuries, like a tower of strength, shall stand up, its sides and summit flashing in the light of heaven, a monument for coming ages!

III. BUT THERE IS A THIRD CAUSE OF OUR GREAT SUCCESSES. THE CHARACTER OF OUR OPINIONS HAS BEEN SUCH AS TO INSURE US A FAVORABLE RECEPTION.

At first despised, because totally misunderstood, they have been gradually acquiring the confidence of the public. When carefully and candidly examined, they have seldom failed to be respected; not unfrequently, they are admired and lauded. But, to give each his own opportunity of private judgment, we shall conclude our remarks by presenting a brief analysis of our theological system; and, in order to be sufficiently explicit, we will state the number of our points in passing.

1. *The Wesleyan theology was an attempt to recover and imbody the primitive ideal of Christianity.*

There must have been a period when the plan of human salvation existed solely in the mind of its great Author. It was among his thoughts as an ordinary intellection. He had uttered it to no being. It then existed as an *idea* only. Foreseeing the creation and fall of man, the whole system of redemption must have been at once complete and perfect in the mind of Him who sees the end from the beginning. When, in the revolving cycles of eternity, that idea was uttered, it became in the person who received it the Word—the Λόγος—so beautifully described by John in his memoirs of the Messiah. That Word, he says, was subsequently made flesh; and, in the form and fashion of a man, dwelt among us. The life of that man was the development of the original idea; and the pattern, or ideal, of all true theology. It was afterward portrayed, not by human power or genius, but by express inspiration, in books written for the purpose. Those books, therefore, are the ideal in the state of record. When it shows itself in a man, or in many men, as in a church, it is then the ideal in the state of life and action. If it is entirely pure, unmixed with human dogmas, then the living and the recorded ideal perfectly correspond; there is a sweet and holy consciousness of unity; revelation is but the image of our own being. Then there is no mystery in its pages. The life it only speaks of, we have in reality; Christ himself being formed within us. We then know by experience the full meaning of the wonderful sayings—"*God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself;*" and—"*Through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father!*"

The Bible and the church, therefore, when pure and uncorrupted, equally represent the ideal of our faith. But, unfortunately, both are liable to corruption. The autographs of the former, and the inspired representatives of the latter, have long since passed away. Their places have been supplied respectively, first, by numerous copies and translations, and secondly, by numberless individual professors and bodies of Christian people. As the true recorded ideal undoubtedly exists somewhere in the remaining manuscripts, versions, and editions of the Scriptures; so, we have equal reason to believe, the living ideal is yet extant somewhere within the great body of the church universal. To recover the former, no one edition, version, or manuscript, is exclusively followed, but all within reach are brought together and collated. In the same manner, the latter is scarcely to be expected whole and without mixture in any one division of the professing followers of Christ, but is sought with much confidence by a liberal comparison of all the leading branches of the Christian church. And, because it is more easy to corrupt hearts than books, when both the recorded and living ideals are measurably restored, the latter, in any contrariety between them, must yield in authority to the former; but, on the other hand, when they agree, their unanimity is the highest possible evidence of the truth.

Such were evidently the principles followed by our fathers in the restoration of primitive Christianity. They did not, with the Romanists, set up the life of the church, much less the life of any one part of it, as the supreme authority, and then adopt as corroborating testimony one only of the numerous editions of the Bible, merely because it more nearly corresponded with that life; nor, with ultra Protestants, did they receive the corrected text of revelation as affording us our only light, and thereby totally exclude the genuine Christian experience of all ages. The Bible they presented as our only standard, but receiving much valuable exposition from the practices and opinions of the primitive Christians. Being, therefore, neither Catholics nor Puritans, but occupying middle and more tenable ground between them, they have made us the true conservatives in the church of God, and the most successful modern advocates of the faith of the original apostolic fathers.

2. *The analysis which the Wesleyan theology gives of the ideal is at once simple, natural, and intelligible.*

It begins with the doctrines of man's wickedness. It maintains that he is not what God created him; that his whole nature is lapsed and fallen; and that self-restoration, particularly if we include the idea of originating the means of that restoration, is totally beyond his power. In the next place, our attention is directed to the redemption made for the whole human family, by the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. Every individual is by this redemption rendered capable of working out his personal salvation. But, in order to this, the heart must be renewed by the special influences of God's Spirit; and that paramount love of the Supreme Being, so necessary to the harmony and happiness of creation, and which we lost by the overwhelming sin of the fall, must become again the ruling principle in the soul. In all parts of this great work, the mind co-operates with the aid afforded without constraint. Nothing is offered to it, or done in it, which it cannot refuse or resist. As accepting the overtures of God, from all eternity, in view of our finally doing so, we are divinely elected—you may say especially elected—to the inheritance of the saints; "God hath, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." When a person chooses God for his portion, and receives the full earthly benefit of divine goodness, the essential freedom of the mind is in no degree abridged, but the whole work of grace internally performed may even then be relinquished, periled, lost, by a new and persevering course of iniquity and transgression. Thus, in this system, while mercy is entirely the free gift of God, the responsibility of salvation is as exclusively our own.

These are the FIVE POINTS in the theology of our church. The necessity of regeneration, the universality of the atonement, the free co-operation of the soul in every work of grace, an election to heaven through holiness as the fruit of our faith, and the awful danger, at any stage of our progress, of forfeiting salvation by a return to sin, are the leading features of that system so generally intelligible to the common sense of mankind. Those acquainted with the history of Christian theology will perceive precisely how much has been appropriated of the deep and honest research of the Arminian divines. But Mr. Wesley, acknowledging them as his principal assistants in the recovery of our faith, with an originality peculiarly his own, besides epitomizing and simplifying their work, made invaluable additions to it in the doctrines of sanctification and the witness of the Spirit. That man is capable of complying fully with the command, to love God with all his heart; and that the Spirit gives us a personal assurance, called the witnessing of the Spirit, of our acceptance through faith, was established by arguments to this day entirely unanswered by any who have set themselves in opposition to the truth. And the whole system is so plain, so simple, so natural, so consonant to the obvious import of Scripture, so congenial to the first principles in the philosophy of mind, that men almost entirely unlettered, endowed with no extraordinary gifts of argument or eloquence, have found no difficulty in spreading it through the country, as fast as they could travel by the most rapid conveyances known in their day. It is now outstripping the speed of civilization itself in many lands.

3. *The theology of the Wesleyan Reformation is a recovery of the original catholicity of the ideal.*

A universal religion would be a great blessing to the race. If nothing were gained by it but relief from sectarian feuds, the world would have great reason to rejoice. Paganism itself, once the common religion of mankind, had the merit of being the great pacificator among the nations of the earth. It presented points of agreement involving the dearest interests of man. Christianity, besides the new and wonderful light it was to throw on the present and future destinies of the soul, was intended also to continue, or rather to increase and multiply, the links of connection between man and man. This it would have done, had not Popery, by the agency of ambitious and wicked men, changed—radically changed—the original platform of the church.

As the detestable result of their efforts, opinions have been almost everywhere substituted for faith. The head has displaced the heart. In nearly all parts of the world, the question is uniformly asked, not what a person intends or promises to do, but what he will agree to believe. The deed is of less importance than the creed. If one fails to think, on some five, fifteen, or forty points, precisely in unison with his priest, he can have no share in the uni versal atonement of Christ. Such a man is excluded from the fellowship of the *saints;* and it has been made fashionable to load him with anathemas invented for his use, or send him as an incorrigible skeptic to the lowest regions of despair.

A man's belief is certainly at the bottom of his faith; the one is an exclusive exercise of the understanding, the other also of the heart and will. But, if the fundamental principles or facts of Christianity are believed, and the affections made right, a very great latitude of opinion may be indulged, without the slightest danger to piety, or detriment to grace. Indeed, variety in opinion is precisely what we are prepared both to covet and expect. Look abroad into the natural world. What two substances are in all respects alike? What two mountains, trees, rivers, cascades, are exactly the same? What landscape will compare perfectly with any other you have seen? Nay, in smaller matters, what two spires of grass are of the same color, shape, and length? What child has not amused a leisure hour in the fruitless effort to match two rose-buds, or some tiny floweret of the vale? Not a pebble upon the seashore has ever found its mate. Not a leaf of the majestic forest has fallen upon the duplicate of itself. Not a star in the depths of heaven that does not differ from all other stars in glory. Of the untold millions of the sons of Adam, no two countenances have given to the beholder the same impression. Go where you will, examine what you will, and God's boundless wisdom and omnipotence are seen in the endless and pleasing variety of his works. Even the twin-fruits of the field or forest, whether animal or vegetable, preserve nicely the general plan; for, in these gemini of nature, we discover how nearly two creatures may approach each other in form, without losing the individuality of their being.

What, then, are we to look for and desire in the human race? Is here all variety to be given up? Must we all think and act, any more than look, just alike? Are all human spirits to be cramped into the dimensions of a single creed? And is that creed to descend so far into the minuter matters of human thought, as to embrace in its iron grasp every free element of the soul, and thus enslave the human mind? Let everything in heaven and on earth forbid it! This has been too long the doctrine of the world. It was this that established the laws of heresy in the old Roman Church. It was this that constructed the racks and gibbets of the middle ages. It was this that reared the horrible inquisition, and buried alive its thousands in the darkness of that martyrs' sepulchre—freedom's tomb. It was this that unsheathed the sword of St. Bartholomew's, and deluged the fields of France with Christian blood. This lighted the fires of Constance and Smithfield, and consumed to ashes the bodies of the true saints in the flames of the auto-da-fé. This has followed the footsteps of every sincere reformer; shut against him the temples of the living God; roused the bloodhounds of human wrath, and set them on his track; and hunted him through the world as the most ravenous of beasts. Protestantism itself is now whole centuries further back than it would have been, had this wicked, narrow, and most hateful of all heresies, never seen the light.

Are there, then, no blessings for the men who have toiled so hard and so long to recover the true catholicity of our common faith? Is it no triumph, worthy the approbation of noble minds, to have established a large and growing church on the single yet ample practical pledge—*to avoid all evil, and to do all the good we can?* Can the liberal spirits of this age, men of sound learning and large views, perfectly assure themselves of having meted even-handed justice to those, however humble and unworthy in the estimation of a proud and thankless world, who have so much as undertaken a work so new, so noble, so philanthropic? Are there no great souls, no Fredericks, no Lorenzos, sufficiently free from party spirit to rise up and espouse the cause of liberal and independent thought? If not, we have our recourse. The masses will soon do it. They have already done it. From their number we will raise up men as mighty as those to whom our appeal is made; and, from their success, derived from the exercise of untrammeled minds, we will prove to the world the possibility of retaining the largest freedom of our faculties, while we secure the dearest blessings and benefits of the cross: *If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed!*

4. *The ideal of Christianity, thus recovered and imbodied, has imparted a peculiar inspiration and power to those who have received it.*

By one of the acutest minds of modern days, the Wesleyan Reformation has been styled, "Christianity in earnest." This will not be considered unmerited praise by those who have charged us with an excess, rather than a lack, of inspiration. The charge, also, has been so repeatedly and habitually made, that it would be now impossible to withdraw it. By the common consent of all parties, we have carried our zeal to the highest pitch; some may say, to the borders of fanaticism itself. We have not, then, been a cold and heartless people. We have had men who could leave their homes in a foreign land, and delve into the wilderness of the new world, to bring us the gospel of the Son of God. A long time before there were roads, or bridges, or civilization, in the vast forests beyond the frontier line, they traversed these savage regions, swam our swiftest and widest rivers, housed alternately with the white man and the red hunter—lived, labored, died—to deliver messages of mercy to those whom they knew to be universally unable, and mostly unwilling, to repay them. In peace, fined as vagrants and disturbers of public order; in war, imprisoned as traitors to their country; they struggled through reproach and poverty, with no earthly prospect but an early and unhonored grave in the midst of their persecutors.

The discouragements they met with were appalling. From the Island of Manhattan to the southern line of Georgia, the whole territory was preoccupied by the learned and powerful ministers of the Church of England. The valley of the west was a howling wilderness, dotted here and there by French settlements. New-England was literally owned and possessed by a church founded as the established order. Wherever the missionaries went, they met a settled and determined opposition. The men employed in this work were alone, poor, illiterate, and unfriended. But were they ordinary men? Were they ever known to despond? Did they ever seem dejected? No—never. They trusted and gloried in their mission. If opposed and persecuted, they shouted and praised God the louder. With a firm faith in the final result of their arduous labors, they advanced over every obstacle, everywhere scattering the seeds of a moral revolution.

Howard has been celebrated for visiting the prisons of civilized Europe. His zeal in a good cause is universally acknowledged. But our men have made themselves the prisoners by their work. The patriots of ancient Greece have been embalmed in honors, for daring to defend their homes against the invasion of their enemies. Rome has received an immortality of renown, for the spirit and resolution manifested in the conquest of the world. But it would be safe to set FRANCIS ASBURY against the philanthropists of every age. His indomitable perseverance was never excelled by any man. The delivery of some twenty thousand sermons, his presiding in more than two hundred annual conferences, and traveling nearly three hundred thousand miles within thirty years, should be enough to prove this assertion. His benevolence was never surpassed. Without money, far from friends who might assist him, he was known to sell the very garments he wore to aid his faithful and laborious preachers. But he was not alone. He was surrounded by a band of more than Spartans. Nay, from Themistocles to Epaminondas—from Leonidas to Lysander—from the beginning to the end of Roman and Grecian greatness, there never was a man of nobler, loftier, purer qualities, than the rank and file of those daring heroes, who now sleep without a record or a stone to tell where they slumber. They had a courage which Thermopylæ itself can but barely rival. They had a fortitude which the troops of the ambitious Cæsar never equaled. They had an energy, a perseverance, which, had they not been strangers to the heart of Hannibal, would have reduced Rome itself to the condition of an African province. Weakened by poverty, trammeled by illiteracy, stung by reproach, they traveled, they preached, they conquered. Whether living or dying, it seemed to be their resolution to stamp the impress of the recovered ideal on the resisting marble, however adamantine, of the human mind. Though the work was mighty, their success is more and more certain; and most heartily do we think, could the voice of posterity now reach us, we might hear them shouting—

"AND US SHALL THE VICTORY EXALT TO HEAVEN!"

We have now concluded our remarks. A few of the more prominent reasons have been given why the Wesleyan Reformation has thus far so gloriously succeeded. We have stated the truth as we understand it. Let others judge what allowances should be made for our partialities. We ask not for the generosity shown to the good patriarch on the occasion before mentioned. Let facts and philosophy stand on their own merits. If the preceding statements are not consistent with history and sound logic, the kiss of Esau could not save them. If they are so, let those interested profit by them. The banner under which we have so far prospered is the best ensign and pledge of future conquests. Let us never furl it, but only add new stars to adorn it. We began in weakness; we have been raised to power. A little more than a century ago, Wesley, poor and friendless, crossed the Atlantic in quest of labor. Let the heavens now open—let the sainted patriarch now look forth on his descendants. The very angels would rebuke the man who would silence his well-earned exultation—"*With my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands!*"

SERMON XXVIII.

The Double Baptism—Real Baptism.

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"I indeed baptize you with water, but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost."—Mark i, 8.

OUR text proves, if the thing needs any proof, that baptism is of two kinds, the *real* and the *symbolical*. In the former, the *administrator* is God; the *element* is his Holy Spirit; and the *subject* is the human being. In the latter, the *administrator* is God's minister; the *element* is water; and the *subject* is the human person. Our purpose, at the present time, is, to discuss the *mode* in which both these baptisms (or this twofold baptism) are performed; and the question of mode involves two points, namely, the MOTION and the AMOUNT. In regard to the *motion*, we have the question, Is *the subject plunged into the element, or does the element descend upon the subject?* In regard to the amount, the question is, *Must the element be so abundant as that it shall come in contact with the entire surface of the person?* We shall endeavor, as far as possible, in the fear of God, in submission to his word, and in the spirit of Christian candor toward our brethren, of our own or any other denomination, who differ from us, to ascertain the truth upon these points, both in regard to baptism real, and baptism symbolical.

I. REAL BAPTISM.

We fearlessly assume that when the Holy Spirit performs *baptism*, not only is the thing *real*, but the term is *literal*. Immersionists have as boldly assumed, and affusionists have as tamely granted, that because the term here was *spiritual*, it was therefore *figurative*. Few epithets are more frequently confounded in theology than these last two; yet few are more distinct, or more necessary to be distinguished. The term, *spiritual*, is opposed to *corporeal; figurative* to *literal*. A spiritual term is the literal designation of a spiritual or incorporeal object or operation. It is true, that a large amount of those terms are borrowed from the material world, and hence have a sort of figurative origin; but, the moment they become an ordinary technic, they are literal. Yet it is by no means certain, that the spiritual term, *baptism*, is borrowed from its first application to its water symbol. Χεω, I pour, and *βαπτιζω*, I baptize, are the literal names of real, though spiritual, operations, not borrowed, probably, from any religious rite, but transferred from their general use to express an invisible, though real, performance. The application of *βαπτιζω*, both to the real and visible baptism in Christianity, so far as we know, commenced simultaneously; both taking their origin, under divine guidance, from John the Baptist. If either, the baptism of the Holy Spirit is literal, and that of water, both in name and thing, symbolical.

It is maintained, that the word *βαπτιζω*, of itself, has so positive and invariable a meaning in all Greek literature, that it settles the point, of itself, in every case. No difficulties, no improbabilities, it seems, can obviate its single force; and we are required to surrender, unless we can produce a case of an *impossibility* of its meaning to plunge. Such controversialists are hard taskmasters; but without granting such a force in the word, we accept the challenge; we will demonstrate the impossibility. We take the case of real baptism; and, before we have done, we expect to show that it CANNOT be immersion. In *motion* it is the descent of the element; in *amount*, it is partial.

I. THE QUESTION OF MOTION.

The evidence is conclusive from Scripture, that the renovating and sanctifying dispensation of God's Spirit, which ever is called baptism, is always expressed under the conception of its descent upon the subject. If other cases exist of spiritual operation, and for other purposes, those are never called baptism.

1. In the promises of the Old Testament, both the sanctifying descent, and its representation by the symbol of water affusion, are abundantly asserted: "I will POUR water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will POUR my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." Isa. xliv, 3. "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and all your idols will I cleanse you. . . . And I will put my Spirit within you." Ezek. xxxvi, 25, &c. "He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he *shed* on us abundantly." Titus iii, 5, 6. Passages like these teach us, that, in both dispensations, the sanctifying communication of God's Spirit existed, idiomatically expressed by descent, as indicating its origin from "God most high," and most appropriately represented to the eye under the symbol of water.

2. This symbolism between the Spirit and the water is more definitely developed in the new covenant, under the form and title of the double baptism. Our text is but one of several reiterations by John of the same great announcement given by the different evangelists, not as different narrations of the same utterance, but as different utterances of the same great truth: "I, indeed, baptize you with water, but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost . . . He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." Matt. iii, 11; Luke iii, 16. The same de-

claration is ascribed to our Lord himself. There seem abundant proofs that baptism by water is the visible type of baptism by the Holy Spirit. The former baptism is the best possible sensible realization of the true conception of the latter.

3. In every case which we have been able to find, either from our own researches or the quotations of immersionists, of baptism with the spiritual element, it is represented not as the descent of the subject into the element, but a descent of the element upon the subject. Thus, when Peter was addressing the company of Cornelius, "the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard;" and even "on the Gentiles also was POURED OUT THE GIFT of the Holy Ghost. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost, as well as we?" Acts x, 44–47. The holy, spiritual baptism, is here, indeed, said to be received; but it has just been called "a gift poured." To be the recipient was, therefore, to be the subject of affusion. To "receive" "the poured-out gift," and to be baptized with water, are made necessary parallels. If they had "received" one, nobody could "forbid" the other. This implication, Peter, in his subsequent recital, explicitly affirms: "The Holy Ghost FELL on them as *on us at the beginning*. Then remembered I the word [not of John, but] of the Lord, John, indeed, baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost." Acts xi, 16. Thus Peter expressly pronounces the outpouring and the falling of the Holy Spirit to be baptism.

The most signal fulfillment of our text was at the day of Pentecost, when they were baptized "with the Holy Ghost and with fire." The question, whether the *amount* of these elements was sufficient to be an immersion, we postpone. But that they were affused, Peter expressly declares: "This is that spoken by the prophet Joel, I will POUR OUT my Spirit upon all flesh." Acts ii, 17. The *outpourings* of the Spirit, then named even in the Old Testament, were baptisms. And he adds, "Be baptized every one of you, and ye shall *receive the gift* of the Holy Ghost." Did mortal man ever talk of receiving an element in which he was submerged? Besides, as we have already noticed, "the gift of the Holy Ghost was poured out."

Twice has God made spiritual baptism really or emblematically visible; and both times it was by descent. The baptism of fire (being to the Spirit what lightning is to electricity, its visible manifestation) was certainly by descent: "There appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire; and it *sat upon* each of them." The tongues were above them; for a sitting object is necessarily above the object sat upon. Otherwise it would be said, that the tongues hung to, not sat upon, them. Immersion, or not, this was a descent. Visible spiritual baptism again took place at the river to Jesus, when "the heavens were opened unto him, and he SAW THE SPIRIT DESCENDING like a dove, and *lighting upon* him." Here, then, the Spirit itself, not its emblem, was seen, visibly moving in space, baptismally descending upon the Saviour. When God shows us how he baptizes, the element descends upon the subject.

These are our passages in proof of our proposition. The cleansing or sanctifying operations of God upon man are alone called baptism; and when represented as baptism, are presented under the conception of descent. We now refute the objections to this argument.

1. Irrelevant it is, to quote against us texts expressing other operations of the Spirit than his cleansing process, and which are, therefore, presented under other conceptions and images than affusion, or of water, in any mode. With these, baptism has nothing to do. Such images as these, "to drink into one Spirit," (1 Cor. xii, 13,) breathing, (John xx, 22,) blowing, (Acts ii, 2, 4,) anointing, (2 Cor. ii, 21,) voice, (1 Kings xix, 1,) express no operation of which baptism is the symbol, and have, therefore, nothing to do with this discussion. Never are these modes or operations called the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which affusion alone is. Yet all these (except "blowing," which we shall subsequently dispose of) express a *partial* recipiency upon the person, and would all be properly emblemed by the *partial affusion* of a common symbolical element upon the subject.

2. "This opinion," we are told, "teaches that God is material;" whereas, "we cannot have him poured on us. Baptism, whatever be the mode, cannot represent either the manner of conveying the Spirit, or his operations on

the soul. This error is as dishonorable to God, as that of the Anthropomorphites."*

Surely, remarks like these are innocent, only when they are ignorant. (1.) How does this presumptuous objector *know* that God can make no movement in space, no approximation to, and no descent upon, the human soul? God can move in space, if God can occupy space; if he does not occupy space, he is nowhere; and if nowhere, he is nothing—and thus the objector is a virtual atheist. (2.) How dares the objector contradict the scripture, which saith, Jesus "*saw the Spirit descending!*" not the emblem, but "*the Spirit.*" (3.) The resemblance on which the figure is founded, we are told, lies not between pouring water and "the *operations* of the Spirit on the soul," but between immersion in water and "the *effects* of the influences of the Spirit." But the soul is spirit as well as God; and effects, operated by the Spirit of God on the human spirit, are performed operations by the one, and experienced operations in the other; and those experiences are themselves spiritual operations; and if spirit's operations cannot be represented by pouring water, how can they be represented by plunging into water? If we materialize God, the objector materializes God and the soul. (4.) But our view does not in any respect materialize God at all, any more than the objector's own. It is not, unless we choose, "founded on the error that there is a *literal* pouring of his Spirit." It only affirms that the best possible *conception* of the ineffable operation of his cleansing Spirit, either in thought or in language; and, therefore, in visible symbol, is that of *pouring*. Just as the best conception of the inconceivable repose of God at the close of creation, both in thought and language, is REST, (the Hebrew word, *sabbath*, signifies *rest*,) and is, therefore, best symbolized by the weekly repose of our voluntary muscles; just so the inconceivable sanctifying baptism of God's Spirit is best symbolized by the affusion of physical water. In both cases it is undeniable, that a mode of God's Spirit is represented by a visible operation; and both, or neither, materialize God. The objection of the

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* This, and most of the arguments of immersionists alluded to in this sermon, are found in the writings of Alexander Carson.

Deist to the former is the very objection of the immersionist to the latter. It is the very purpose and beauty of a symbol to make visible the best conception of the invisible. (5.) Of a spiritual operation, the ceremonial representation would be a *visible symbol;* the name would be a *verbal symbol;* and the conception a *mental symbol.* God's operations are as really *symbolized* by each of the three, as by either of the three. Scripture, therefore, as much materializes God, by calling his operations *pouring*, as by commanding us to signify those operations by water affusion or immersion. In predicating of the Spirit even the term, *operation*, (which is a physical term,) the objector as much materializes God, as if he had represented those operations by immersion. In regard to his own *being*, God has forbidden it to be represented in shape, lest our worship should forget him, and settle upon the idol; but he has also, in some cases, directed us visibly to represent his *operations*, or else we have no sabbath. From these considerations we sustain the Scriptures, in declaring that water baptism is the *figure* of the literal descent of God's sanctifying Spirit upon us.

3. But it is again objected, that "the *pouring* is no part of the baptism." "The baptism takes place after the pouring is over," and consists in the immersion which results.

(1.) Very good. This surrenders the whole question, so far as the MOTION performed is concerned. It is not then necessary that the subject should descend into the element—the element may descend upon the subject; *the word does not always then signify to dip or plunge;* and immersion, after all, by concession, is performed BY AFFUSION! Let this be well remembered when we come to discuss the *amount*.

(2.) Apart from the question of amount, the case we have made out from Scripture is this: the term baptism is connected with no other mode of the Spirit's operation but pouring; any other mode, or any other no-mode, is therefore unauthorized. Who, therefore, dare cut off this mode, even in idea, from the whole conception of Spirit baptism? Granting that the innate meaning of *baptism* does not of itself express the whole process: countless words in all languages express but a part of the object for which they stand, and take in the whole only by implication. Granting that the bare word βαπτιζω does not, lexically, express more than the amount, who dares affirm that it does not include, by implication, that mode with which Scripture inseparably associates it?

(3.) Water baptism, in order to be a visible symbol of the Scripture picture of spiritual baptism, must represent three ideas:—1. Origination of the Spirit's influence in and from God—"I WILL pour out," &c.; 2. That man is the subject; and, 3. The transmission from God to man. And as nearly all Scripture, and all language, and all mental conception, represent God above and man below, so this transmission is by descent. Pouring alone (or sprinkling, which is merely moderate pouring) expresses these three, and is therefore the only adequate symbol. Immersion gives not God the glory; nothing comes from above. All comes to the candidate horizontally, and nothing vertically; all from man, and nothing from heaven. It is all self-conversionism. It may express one's own moral reformation, but not God's regeneration. It looks the very child of Pharisaism. By its own claim, it represents only "*effects*," and atheistically acknowledges no cause.

We have done with this part of our subject. By the uniform language of Scripture, by the symbols and instances divinely presented, by the concession of immersionists, and by the reason of the case, we have shown that the real, the divine, the model baptism, is by pouring. From the question of motion we proceed to

II. THE QUESTION OF AMOUNT. IS THE ENTIRE PERSON ENVELOPED BY THE ELEMENT?

In every instance, without exception, the reverse is the fact. This will appear, both from the language of Scripture, and by the divine visible presentations of the process.

1. *The Scripture language.* Instead of representing the person inclosed within the element, Scripture declares the element to be inclosed within the subject. Nor is the subject represented as soaked or saturated like a spunge, but as receiving and containing like a vessel. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels;" "vessels of mercy," "vessels of wrath." So Ezekiel: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you... and put my Spirit within you." No one would talk

of putting clean water within a spunge; and the term sprinkle expresses an amount decisive against immersion. "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit." Eph. v, 18. As the drinker contains the wine, instead of being plunged into it, or absorbing it as a spunge, so the Christian contains the Spirit, instead of being immersed into it. So the disciples "received" the Holy Ghost; and Peter promised—"Be baptized, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Did any man ever "receive" the river or font by being plunged into it? Not only was the "Spirit put within" them and they "received" it, but they were "filled with the Holy Ghost." A vessel, however perfectly filled, is not thereby immersed. This is the uniform and only phraseology of Scripture upon this point; and when we add that the process, by these phrases, is preceded and produced by pouring, it seems a moral *impossibility* to reconcile that process with the idea of immersion. If so, βαπτιζω does not always signify immerse, in the New Testament.

2. *The baptismal dove.* The Holy Spirit, at the baptism of Jesus, "descended in bodily shape like a dove upon him." Was this immersion in the Holy Spirit? Was he plunged into the dove? Had the Spirit made itself visible as a luminous vapor, and wrapped him round, even without a downward plunge into it, we would admit immersion; but since the amount of the Spirit is limited by the outline of the "bodily shape" of a dove, the idea of immersion is absolutely impossible—and this is IMPOSSIBILITY number second.

3. *The baptism of fire.* There was no immersion, either of the Spirit, or of the emblems of the Spirit, or of fire, on the day of Pentecost. It is said, "There came a sound from heaven, *as of* a rushing mighty wind; and it filled all the house where they were sitting." From this, there is much loose talk of an immersion in a "wind," and in "a sound," as "the emblems of the Spirit." But, first, these were NOT "the emblems of the Spirit." They were merely the indications of the Spirit's presence, just as the concussion of the air is the indication of the lightning's presence, being as effect to cause. Even if "*a wind*" did sweep them, and "*a sound*" fill every ear in the room, it is egregious burlesque to call this, forsooth, the baptism of

the Spirit. Second, it is not said there was a "wind;" there was a sound resembling the sound of wind; but who knows there was any wind? No living mortal. But they were immersed in "a sound!" We will treat this nonsense with all patience. Sound, then, is the *sensible* effect of the vibration of air upon the tympanum of the ear; it can cover or immerse just the surface of that little tympanum with the sensation, and no more; we say that a room is "filled" with sound when every ear is filled with the sensation; but to talk of immersing the whole person with the sensation is physical absurdity. It is just partial affusion.

But the baptism of fire. Allow the immersion of "wind" and sound, if you wish; *were they* IMMERSED IN FIRE? Impossible. The element was no larger in amount than an ordinary tongue, and how could a man be immersed in a tongue? We coolly label this, IMPOSSIBILITY *the third*—the third demonstration that βαπτιζω, in the New Testament, does not signify to immerse.

And here, if nowhere else, we deem ourselves impregnable. It cannot be said that the *baptism of fire* is merely a figure; for it is a name affixed to an element and an operation just as visible as so much water or blood. It cannot be denied that this occasion was that of the baptism of fire; for Jesus had bidden them wait at Jerusalem for this as the occasion (Acts i, 4, 5) of the fulfillment of the promise of the Father, in which the baptism of fire was included. It cannot be denied that the fire descended, for it first "appeared," and then "*it sat upon them.*" It cannot be immersion; for it is as plain as a geometrical demonstration could make it—if a man could not be inclosed in an ordinarily sized tongue, this was not immersion. Nor is this an ordinary barren case; it is an all-controlling model instance.

In regard to this whole argument of *amount*, we are aware of but one poor evasion that immersionists have furnished. A few passages are quoted, having nothing to do with baptism, spiritual or symbolical, which speak of us as being *in* God. Thus: "*In* him we live, and move, and have our being." God does indeed surround good men and bad; but this is not the baptism of the Spirit, nor is Christian baptism any figure of this. Persons in a state of spiritual perception, by which God reveals visions unto them, are sometimes said to be "in the Spirit." Thus John was "carried away in the Spirit" into the wilderness, and to a high mountain. Rev. xvii, 3; ii, 10. He "saw a door opened in heaven," and "immediately I was in the Spirit," or in a state of spiritual perception. But this is no sanctifying operation of the Spirit, and no prototype of water baptism. No more are "walking in the Spirit," "dwelling in God," baptismal images. They refer, not to the process of God's dispensing his Spirit, but to our walking and living in accordance with the dictates of that Spirit. And how do these expressions obviate the argument drawn from the visible baptismal dove and tongues of fire?

We have gone through the great subject of real baptism; but before taking up the subject of the symbolical, we may show the all-controlling force of the argument drawn from the former over the latter baptism.

1. We settle the Biblical, ritual use of the word. If the high grounds asserted by immersionists in regard to the sense of βαπτιζω, in the classics and lexicons, were sustainable, yet one instance of plain *impossibility* of its meaning immerse, will prove it to belong to that numerous class of words, in which the transfer to Christian institutions has changed the meaning from its classic use. The pulpit is hardly the place for verbal criticism; and, happily, upon this subject God has not left the unlearned brother at the mercy of heathen poets and learned lexicons. The Bible is its own dictionary; the Spirit is his own interpreter. *He has made the thing visible*—so visible, that he that hath eyes to see may see. Logicians tell us that the best, nay, the only *real* definition of a word, is to point to the object and apply the name. Point to a lamp, and say, "I call that a *lamp;*" and the word is incontrovertibly defined. Point to a man moving along your streets, and say, "I call that *walking*," and the definition is complete. Now God has thus defined the word in question. He poured out upon his Son, visibly and really —it was pouring, and it was not immersion—and he called it *baptism.* He poured out the tongue of fire upon the disciples, visibly and really—it was pouring, and it was not immersion—and he called it *baptism.* Now it makes

no difference in the mode, what the element is. Whether water or fire, oil or vapor, matter or spirit, if in one case baptism does not necessarily mean immersion, it need not in another. But we do more than settle the extension of the term; for,

2. We fix the form of the symbol. A formal symbol must, by its very form, express its reality. Otherwise it is no symbol at all. The very purpose of a visible formal symbol is, to represent to the human mind an idea of some unseen reality. If it does not do this, it is no symbol, but an arbitrary mummery. Now God has twice made that reality visible. But the picture must conform to the original, or it is no picture; the copy, to be a copy, must correspond to the pattern. "See that thou make all things according to the pattern shown to thee in the mount." And what was the pattern "shown thee" at the Pentecost, and at the river, where God himself baptized? With God's word in my hand, and against an opposing world, I were forced to reiterate, "It was pouring, and it was not immersion." This is the way Christ baptizeth; and the Christian may well answer, when told that pouring is not baptism, "This is the way my God baptized me, and this is the way my minister shall."

And this argument remains the same, should we even concede that the application of the term baptism to the spiritual affusion is figurative. The *things* must conform, whatever you do with the name. The symbolical *thing* must be the picture of the real thing.

3. *We secure one great law of interpretation.* As the spiritual process is called baptism, and that baptism is by affusion, and in both name and form is the type of water baptism, so, *in all cases of water baptism, the meaning of the term, and the conception of the process, must, in accordance with the type, be* AFFUSION. We have a perfect right to say that, ritually, baptism means, and would correctly, in every case, be translated, *affusion.* To ask, in any passage of Scripture, whether the baptism is by affusion or immersion, is to ask whether the affusion is by affusion or immersion.

SERMON XXIX.

The Double Baptism—Symbolical Baptism.

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"I indeed baptize you with water, but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost."—Mark i, 8.

II. SYMBOLICAL BAPTISM.

WE divide this part of our subject into two parts, namely, baptisms in the Old Testament and baptisms in the New.

I. BAPTISMS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

We have here to prove, first, that there were various personal baptisms imposed by Moses; and, second, that none of these were by immersion.

1. *There were various baptisms imposed by Moses, and those so called were personal.*

St. Paul tells us, that the Mosaic ritual "stood in meats, and drinks, and divers baptisms, (Greek, *διαφοροις βαπτισμοις*,) and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation," under Christ. There were divers or various baptisms then under the old dispensation. These baptisms were personal, as may be shown,

(1.) *From a correct translation of the passage.* Professor Stuart's is as follows: "Meats, and drinks, and divers washings—ordinances pertaining to the flesh." This means that the meats, drinks, and baptisms, were all included, as ordinances pertaining to the flesh or body. The baptisms were, therefore, personal. (2.) *From the apostle's argument.* He contrasts the efficacy of the blood of Christ, *conceptually* applied to the person, with the inefficacy of these various baptisms *visibly* applied to the person, in purifying the conscience. (3.) Immersions there were of cups, &c.; but these were not for the purpose of cleansing the conscience, but to render those things fit for the use of the clean person. These, therefore, could not have been contrasted with the blood of Christ, nor included in the various baptisms. Those baptisms were, therefore, purely personal.

2. These "*various baptisms*," then, were "IMPOSED;" and they were personal: we must now walk through the Old Testament, and show that none of the personal baptisms were immersion.

We prepare the way, by one sweeping affirmation, that the Hebrew word for immerse is not once used in the commands which impose the modes of these "various baptisms." The English words are, *sprinkle*, *wash*, *bathe*, neither of which imposed the specific mode, immersion. If, in performing the command, the will-worship of the Jew selected that mode, it was the Jew who chose, not God who "*imposed*," the mode. Washing, when its purpose is, not physical, but symbolical cleanness, requires not totality. The word rendered bathe simply signifies to wash. Even with the bad rendering, "bathe," a false idea will not be received by those who are aware, that in the East bathing is performed, not by immersion, but by affusion.* We specify some of these "various baptisms," "imposed" by Moses.

There was the baptism of the PRIESTS, (Ex. xxix, 4,) expressive of peculiar sanctity. At the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, Moses was to *wash* with water, and *sprinkle*, with blood and oil, Aaron and his sons.

There was the baptism of the LEVITES. He was to "sprinkle water of purifying upon them—and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean."

There was the baptism of the LEPERS. The priest was to make a brush of cedar and hyssop, tied with a scarlet thread, and, dipping the brush into the blood of a slain bird, *sprinkle* it upon the leper seven times.

There was the water of *separation*, or PURIFICATION, after the preparing of which "the priest shall wash his clothes and shall bathe himself in water." "The purifying of the Jews" was performed (John ii, 6) with waterpots containing six or eight gallons.

There was the *cleansing from a dead man*. Whoever touched a corpse was unclean, and if he did not purify himself, was to be cut off, "because the water of purification was not SPRINKLED upon him." To this the word *baptizo* is expressly applied in the Greek of the Apocrypha.

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* See Bush's Scripture Illustrations, p. 473.

There was the baptism of ALL *the people.* When Moses had spoken every precept to all the people, according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people. (Was not similar John's baptism of "ALL JUDEA?")

Such were the "various baptisms imposed" by the Mosaic law. None of them were immersion. If the Jews made immersion of them, it would be an insult to inspiration to suppose, that St. Paul should inaccurately represent the practices of men as "imposed" by God. But it is difficult to believe that in the arid desert, in which, for forty years, the Israelites wandered, where, at the present day, the Mohammedan Arab rubs sand for water upon his body, as his sacred ablution, they could have expended water in voluntary religious immersions. We have thus upon this question swept the Old Testament clear; there were various baptisms, but no immersion.

Let not the importance of Old Testament baptism, nor its identity with that of the New, be undervalued. The one great purpose of all religion, pervading the whole system of revelation, *the cleansing and renewing man's depraved nature, by the dispensation of God's Spirit from on high,* is the one great idea which the entire system of water lustrations in both Testaments represents. The complexity of a former dispensation required that they should be various; the simplicity of the new condensed them down to one, and that one to occupy the initiatory place of abolished circumcision.

In the four hundred years between the Old Testament and the New, the Jewish rabbis invented the baptism of converts to the faith; and that baptism was expressed by the Hebrew word for immersion, and doubtless by the unchanged classic *βαπτιζω.* Forty years before Christ, at least, proselyte immersion was a topic of debate in the Hebrew schools. We have then, in this interval, placed, side by side, the divine institution of affusion and sprinkling, and the human invention of convert immersion. If immersion is true, Jesus Christ, the great denouncer of human traditions, *added* to the divine, did reject the divine, and adopt into his own system one of those very traditions, namely, convert immersion. Omitting those modes which the word of God "imposed," as significant of HIS "outpouring" and his cleansing, he imported, from the Jewish rabbis, a mode, which, as before said, gives not God the glory, and bears the lineaments of Pharisaic parentage in its face.

The Greek word, βαπτιζω, introduced to express convert immersion, would naturally become applied, vernacularly, to express any sacred ablution. And accordingly we find it incontestably applied, in the Greek of the Apocrypha, to designate the sprinkling of the man contaminated by a corpse. Sirach xxxiv, 25. When John the Baptist came, it was, doubtless, then the most obvious vernacular word for him to appropriate, both to the real purification by the Holy Spirit and its visible symbol of outpoured water.

We enter the New Testament, then, with the full consciousness that the burden of proof lies upon the immersionist. He cannot say that the word, in its sacred use, secures the presumption in his favor, for we have repeatedly proved it to mean affusion. We additionally claim that it is for him to prove that *affusion of the Holy Spirit is visibly imaged by immersion!* At the threshold of the New Testament we have a right to stand still and say to him, "Prove your immersionism." Failure in any point is demonstration against him.

II. NEW TESTAMENT BAPTISMS.

These we divide into three kinds: baptism irrespective of locality; in-door baptism; and out-door baptism.

1. *Baptism irrespective of locality.* There are allusions to baptism, founded on resemblance. When baptism is compared to the passage of the cloud and the sea—to the flood—and to a burial, much wild allegorizing would be saved, if it were first inquired and settled, in what point the resemblance lay. The resemblance may be in the form, in the element, in the nature, in the import, or in the spiritual prototype. Commentators and controversialists, neglecting this, have, on both sides, run into fancied parallelisms, and always in the form, of course; both sides have been equally extravagant and about equally successful. The true commentator will ask, In what does the intended resemblance lie? And judging the intention, first, by the demands of the argument, and, second, by the pre-

cise amount of the words, he will utterly repudiate any addition of others' gratuitous nonsense to the apostle's expressed sense.

Thus when the Israelites are said to be "baptized unto Moses, in the cloud and in the sea," in what does the argument require the resemblance to lie? Plainly in the import of baptism, namely, *consecration.* The argument is, though the Israelites were consecrated to Moses by the miraculous deliverance through the sea, and the relief of the cloud, yet they rebelled against him; so we, baptismally consecrated to Christ, may rebel against him, and be lost. This sense the phrase "baptized into" a person or thing requires, meaning, as it always does, *consecrated* to its object. Now this argument is equally valid, whatever be the form. And though the water of the sea may have suggested the term baptism, we have no belief that the apostle, in thought, called up the form.

Yet, if we must run out the parallel of form, the affusionist will have, by a chance trifle, the advantage. That nice immersion formed, by the sea on each side, and the cloud over head, has only existed in sprightly fancy; for, in fact, the cloud was behind, not above, the Israelites, in their pass through the sea. Immersion there was not; for they passed over on "dry ground." Affusion there may have been; for a strong wind existed, to produce a spray. As for the cloud at the sea, it seems to have been a dry one; and neither immersion nor affusion can be extracted from it. A passage in Judges v, 4, however, in describing something very like this scene, says, "the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water."

The passage, 1 Peter iii, 21, has been overlaid with various strata of commentary. Just so far as the apostle asserts, we will admit; not a syllable further. Having told us that in the ark "few persons were saved by water," he adds, "the antitype whereunto, namely, baptism, doth now save us," cautiously superadding that still the baptism must not be merely *symbolical,* but *real.* Now this is all. Water of the flood incidentally suggests water of baptism. Noah was saved by one, as the occasional cause; we are saved by the other, as the occasional, spiritual baptism being the essential cause. Now if any one will run out a parallel touching the ark *sprinkled,* or the ark *immersed;*

both will measurably succeed, and both will partially fail. The affusionist will not be able to deny that both shower above and flood beneath will make a compound immersion; and the immersionist, with all his force, will not be able to make the necessary submerging plunge of the ark into the depths of the water.

But the immersionist lights upon the phrase, "*buried with him by baptism*," (Rom. vi, 4, and Col. ii, 12, *in baptism*,) and cries, "Ευϱηκα; here the allusion *must* be to the form." Yet we fearlessly affirm that the allusion to the form is unproved, unnecessary, and improbable.

The apostle is enforcing the duty of the Christian to be holy. He does this by a threefold parallel between the Christian's repentance, church profession, and sanctification, and Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Thus,

Renunciation of sin is death,	Baptismal profession is burial,	Holy life is resurrection.

I. Death. Renunciation of sin is death to sin. "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Verse 2. As Christ, in death, closed his sensibilities to all the wicked world around him, so the Christian, in repentance, closes his sensibilities to the world, the flesh, and the devil. Thus is made out the image of death. Changing the numerical order, we explain next

III. The resurrection. As holiness is a new life, and resurrection is a new life, so in this threefold parallel, sanctification is resurrection. Like as Christ was raised up from the dead, even so we also should walk in newness of life. The parallel is chiefly verbal; but as his purpose is, not reasoning, but illustration, it accomplishes his object.

II. The burial. Where the death is repentance, and the resurrection is sanctification, what now is the intermediate burial? A cool deposit of the body under water! Immeasurable bathos! But we object not to the solecism in the rhetoric; we denounce the heresy in the theology. It gives to corporeal motion a superstitious value. It makes our conformity to Christ's burial consist in a mere horizontal position of body. It is the very essence of Popery.

Again we ask, where the death is repentance, and the resurrection sanctification, what is the intermediate burial?

Most persons would, we think, answer, A Christian profession. And this is by baptism. Baptism, whatever be its mode, is the act of professed dedication to the Trinity, consecration to Christianity, and imbodiment into the church. As Christ was buried from the scenes of external nature into the tomb, so the Christian, in baptismal dedication, is *buried* from the world into Christ's body, the church. Thus whatever is the form of the mere rite, repentance is the death, baptism is the burial, and holiness the resurrection.

Yet if the corporeal allusion be still insisted on, and must be conceded, we affirm, it makes nothing for immersion. Deposit a body in the grave, and let it lie there for ever—you have not buried it. Something must descend, be sprinkled, or poured upon it. Meantime, if this one phrase of burying must exert so all-controlling a power in modifying the form of baptism, those numerous passages which describe a baptism by God's "OUTPOURING" must and shall have a little omnipotence in them too. If one *must* be satisfied, both *shall* be satisfied. Nay, more; if this comparatively casual allusion must be regarded, the great instituted relation of the *symbol* to its *reality* shall immeasurably predominate. The *burying* shall be by *pouring*. If either rule, the *pouring* is a thousand fold the master. If any one object, that the sprinkling of a few drops of water cannot be the burial of a whole man, we answer, The apostle was too good a scholar and too great a traveler, to be ignorant, that the Romans, to whose capital he was writing, held that a little dust, thrice *sprinkled*, was ritually considered a complete burial. Symbols ever incline to be abridgments; and we ought to be better philosophers than to demand, or to suppose, that human nature demands, that emblems must mathematically fill out the complete dimensions of their objects. Besides, the objector little realizes the vividness of the apostle's allusions. In the very preceding verse (Col. ii, 11) he makes circumcision "a putting off the *body* of the sins of the flesh." Now if he could magnify the minute operation of the circumcision-knife, cutting but a single fibre, into a severing of a whole "*body*," then he could easily magnify a drop upon a man's head into a burial of his whole person. Finally, the apostle expressly says it was by affusion. For we have abundantly proved that, in the New Testament ritual, *baptism* means affusion. The phrase should be translated, "buried with him by affusion;" and to ask whether it be by affusion, is to ask whether affusion is affusion.

2. *Out-door baptisms.*

In this class of cases, the immersionist can avail himself of a very unfair advantage arising from the different habits of different climates. We are to transport ourselves to a torrid clime, where sleeping in the open air, living in the desert unsheltered, free familiarity with water in all seasons are customary, and often a luxury. Accustomed to polished calfskins and delicate prunellas, to wet which is often inconvenient and unhealthy, we forget that the Jews with their sandals (a mere shaped shingle, strapped upon the sole of the foot) would step into the water, almost unconsciously, on all occasions possible. To wash the feet was ever a relief and pleasure; and they would not, like a northerner, carefully stop at the water edge. They would baptize, whether by sprinkling or by immersion, *in the river.* Just as the ceremony is, in reality, engraved in the most ancient pictures extant, the humble candidate would kneel in the river, where both administrator and subject would have gone, and there would be performed the *symbol* of the *outpouring* of the Spirit and the pentecostal fire.

The cases are three—1. John's baptism; 2. Baptism of Christ; 3. The eunuch.

(1.) *John's baptism.* It is just what we might expect of the great itinerant field-preacher, to whom all Judea resorted, that he should baptize, whether by immersion or affusion, "*in the river.*" We need not be obliged to avail ourselves of the fact, that the Jordan had double banks, and that a man may stand "in the river," on dry ground. We will hold, most religiously, that he walked with his candidate not only into the river, but into the water; and what did he there? He tells us himself, that he was to be followed by Him who was to "sprinkle all nations;" and that his own water baptism was but the type of HIS great *outpouring* of *the Spirit* and *the fire.*

There are great difficulties in believing, that when Luke tells us of John, that "ALL the people were baptized;" and Mark, that "there went to him ALL the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem;" and Matthew, more than all, that there "went out to him Jerusalem and ALL Judea, and ALL *the region round about* Jordan," the whole could have been immersed. These mass meetings must have consisted of millions; and no wonder John should, in a thirsty land, have sought a place of "many waters." It has been safely calculated, that if *one-half* the masses here named were immersed, John must have immersed nearly forty a minute;* and that, too, allowing them time for "confessing their sins." We may fairly label this, IMPOSSIBILITY number fourth.

(2.) *Baptism of Christ.* Brevity obliges, and the advantage of our position enables, us to present two concessions to the immersionist. Let him have, what he could not maintain, his Greek prepositions and his no-priesthood of Christ. Jesus went down *into* the water and came up *out of* the water. But what was done while *in* the water? Just that baptism was performed between the banks, with the element of water, which was performed on the bank, with the element Spirit. "The Spirit of God, *descending* in bodily shape as a dove," did not immerse him; nor did the water imitation of it.

(3.) *The Ethiopian eunuch.* The Ethiopian was reading that description of the Messiah (in our version unhappily cut in two by the chapters) which promises, "So shall he sprinkle all nations;" a promise verified by the command, "Go baptize all nations." Accordingly, when the thing had been explained to him we see why, at the close of Philip's exposition, he feels, as one of all nations, he is a claimant of sprinkled baptism. We fling in to the immersionist his preposition, and give him his strongest ground, and what can he make of it? They both went down (from the chariot) into the water, and came up (to the chariot) out of the water. Whether they went far enough into the water to submerge Philip's sandals is not said; but we venture to believe, that any Arab, or southern Jew, would snatch the luxury of a knee-deep walk into the fresh element, whether to pour or to sprinkle his kneeling candidate. They went then, at least, knee-deep, and what then was done? Read no further, and no mortal could tell. But whatever he did, he performed (the verification of the promise to "sprinkle all nations") the symbol of the affusion of the Spirit.

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* Hibbard's Christian Baptism, p. 23.

3. *In-door baptism.*

By in-door baptism, we mean those baptisms, the whole narrative of which, places and leaves them in some house. And now we say it is a strong negative evidence against immersion, that not once, in all these instances, is it mentioned either that they went out, or that any preparation or apparatus was provided within. Did the word of itself express immersion, still, in the many cases, we should reasonably expect that some natural explanation would once be dropped, in a book so remarkable for its minute detail of individual transactions as the Bible, showing how, in difficult circumstances, the immersion was effected. Not once does it occur. The most natural air possible, of the thing being done *instanter*, and on the spot; if out-doors, out-doors; if in-doors, within. Baths and cisterns, so extensively manufactured in modern times, for ancient use, are mentioned not once in the whole New Testament. Other vessels or "pots," expressly made for the purifications of the Jews by water affusion, there were; but these "pots" contained but two or three firkins, some six or eight gallons, apiece; good proof that, in our Saviour's time, the lustral rites, the "various baptisms," "imposed until the time of reformation," were not by immersion.

(1.) Our first argument will consist of an assemblage of texts. We have just shown that, in our Saviour's time, the Jews performed the Mosaic baptisms or purifications by water, with "water-pots" containing six or eight gallons; another impossibility of immersion. That these "purifications" were called "various baptisms," not by St. Paul alone, is evident from John iii, 22–27. The facts are, John and Jesus were baptizing; a dispute arose between their disciples about *purifying;* John's disciples came and told him that Jesus's *baptism* was prevailing; John told them *it* ought to prevail. Nothing but utter captiousness will deny, here, that baptism is called purifying; for a dispute about purifying is identified as a dispute about baptism. Put *baptism* in the place of *purifying*, and a coherent story is produced. Deny this identity, and all coherency is destroyed. But among these baptisms or purifications, "ALL the Jews" performed a baptism upon their own persons, every time they came from the market; as well as upon the couches (English, *tables;* Mark vii, 4) on which several persons often reclined at meals. Here then we have immersions of men, and couches larger than men, with no other vessel supplied than eight gallon pots. The immersion of couches at all is unsustained by any authority, (the statement of Maimonides is ten centuries too late,) and may be pronounced a fair impossibility.

(2.) *The pentecostal baptism.* That twelve persons, in some eight hours, should immerse three thousand unprepared strangers, is a physical impossibility. That a scene so hurried and little solemn should take place, under apostolic authority, is, to say the least, morally improbable. Such are the difficulties in regard to time.

But equal difficulties regard the place. The Kedron, in June, was dry and filthy; the pools distant or small. Besides, the scenes of the crucifixion had lately transpired; and nothing but a miracle, which we are unauthorized to suppose, would have rendered the public notoriety of an immersion of so many, safe. Finally, but an hour ago had occurred the visible baptism of fire, performed by the limited descent of the element, as the *type;* how then would the inspired apostles perform the baptism of water to render it the *antitype?* Peter had just said that the spiritual baptism was "shed forth;" would he have pronounced a water baptism, "shed forth," no baptism?

(3.) *Saul.* Three days had he been sunk in feebleness and fasting, when he "arose and was baptized," and then "received meat and was strengthened." Strange, that where every movement is detailed with wonderful minuteness, no going forth in his weak state to a river could have been mentioned! The whole air of it is that he just stood up from his prostration, in order to be baptized while *upon his feet.*

(4.) *The Gentiles with Cornelius.* "Then Peter answered, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" God had just (two verses previous) "poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost" upon them; why should not be "poured out the gift" of water baptism? Who could "forbid," or prevent, the approximation of the latter to those who had "received" the former? The whole construction of Peter's question is so casually natural, on the hypothesis of the application of the water to the person, instead of the person to the water, as to insinuate conviction into the inmost mind. The *real* and the *symbolical* are here most strikingly paralleled.

(5.) *The jailer's family.* There were an inner prison and an outer prison, and the jailer's residence, all probably in one inclosure. The jailer "brought them out" of the inner to the common prison, where they spoke unto him the word of the Lord with all his family, who were doubtless called, by the excitement of the earthquake and outcry, to the spot. There, in the outer prison, they must have been baptized, for it was not until after the baptism that the jailer "brought them into his house." That they were in any other place, there is no divine authority for saying. The baptism, then, on the face of the record, could not have been immersion.

Two spurious interpolations have, however, been inserted into the narrative, in order to make an immersion. One places a tank in the jail! The other invents a journey to the river Strymon. Now the burden of the proof lies upon the immersionist. If a man say, Here is murder, he must show all the requisite circumstances of murder. If he say, Here is immersion, he must *prove*, not *assume*, the requisites of an immersion. He must make out, not a possibility, nor a supposition, but a certainty, or it was not immersion. But the certainty lies on the other side.

(*a*) There was no tank or bath in the jail. A bath in a Roman prison? A piano in Bridewell as much! Philippi was not in Burmah, nor Palestine, but in northern Greece, in the very latitude of "snowy Thrace." Truly, the humanity that could thrust the innocent apostles, all bloody with wounds, into the irons of the inner prison, was quite likely to provide a bath for the cleanliness and luxury of its victims!

(*b*) The apostles, the jailer, and all his family, took no trip at midnight to the Strymon. A city at the close of an earthquake is all uproar; and for the wife, &c., of the jailer, with his prisoners, to have gone forth, could have been safe only with a miracle. Besides, it is not to be supposed that a writer of sense would have omitted so extraordinary, as well as so essential, a link in the train. A midnight immersion in the cold Strymon, of wife and all, before going home, even for a change of garments, is an item well calculated to arrest both the writer's and reader's attention, and could not have been skipped. Further, we have even the faith of the apostles for it, that they did not go out. The authority of the magistrates had placed them in the inner prison, and the jailer had no more legal power to take them to the Strymon, than to the Hudson. When, therefore, the apostles refused to go at the dismission of the magistrates, it was expressly asserting that they not only *would* not go, but had not gone out from the legal custody of the magistrates. Their language, if they had once released themselves "*privily*," was based upon concealment and equivocation. The magistrates might have fairly replied, "With what face can these men pretend that they will not go out without our formal command, when they have already gone by the mere connivance of the jailer, and are now in prison only by voluntarily imprisoning themselves? If the jailer's permit was sufficient for the Strymon, it is good to the Tyber." There was no leaving the prison, then; and there was no bath in the prison; there was a baptism, but no immersion. This is a moral certainty. It closes our Scripture argument.

But, it may be asked, was not immersion the practice of the first two centuries of the Christian church? No evidence of it whatever. Immersion, as a human invention, among the Jews, we have already acknowledged to have existed anterior to our Saviour himself. Thence, aided by the tendencies of a southern climate, by the growing propensities of the church toward superabundant rituals, and by the prevailing classic signification of the word baptizo, it became, with many other corruptions, prevalent in the Romish Church, in the form of immersion, *naked, and three times repeated!* Yet, the most satisfactory proofs exist of the earlier prevalence of sprinkling. In both the apostolic fathers, Barnabas (if genuine) and Hermas, the very earliest of uncanonical writers, clear allusions to baptismal sprinkling exist. In Justin Martyr's Apology to the emperor, A. D. 150, he avoids the use of the word *baptizo*, which the emperor might classically construe immersion, and uses the word λουω, to wash; while, in his other writings, he uses the word baptizo—a most remarkable indication that the classic and sacred meanings of the word differed. In the Latin Church, the earliest translation of the Scriptures, made too early for historic record, (emended by Jerome, 383, thence known as the Vulgate,) avoiding the word *immersio*, transfers unchanged the Greek baptizo—another clear indication that the two were not considered synonymous. The most ancient pictorial delineations of baptism (as early, probably, as the sixth century) represent the candidate as poured upon kneeling, while none exist of immersion.* The monuments of the Greek Church represent Christ and John as standing in the water, and John pouring water on the head of Jesus. Coming into the land whose soil was trodden, and whose language, radically, was spoken, by Jesus himself, the testimony is abundant. The oldest known version of the New Testament, made not far from the close of the first century, the Syriac Peshito, as Professor Stuart informs us, avoiding the Syriac word for immerse, uses a word signifying *to make stand*, or *to confirm;* either because the candidate *stood* in receiving the rite, or because baptism *confirms* him in Christian profession. "The Apostolic Liturgy, so called in the Syriac, represents Christ as *standing* and bowing his head in the water." The missionary Wolfe informs us, that in that land of immutable customs, a sect of Syrian Christians, professing to be followers of John the Baptist, take their infants to the river and sprinkle them; assigning as their reason, that John baptized *at the river, by sprinkling.* The churches of the Armenians, Syro-Jacobites, Copts, Abyssinians, and Syro-Chaldeans, improperly called Nestorians, placing the candidate in water to the neck, *pour* water upon the head. Of the Greek Church it is said, that thirty-five out of forty-five millions hold, with the great body of both Protestants and Romanists, that the form is immaterial. Affusion, therefore, has not only immeasurably the best support from Scripture, but a superior support from purest tradition, and a scarcely inferior from general consent.

The argument, in compressed form, is before you. If we have fulfilled our expectation, we have demonstrated, from the affusion of *the Spirit and the fire*, that real baptism is not immersion; we have thence developed the great law of interpretation, which requires its symbol not to be immersion; we have accordingly traced the "various baptisms," "imposed" in the Old Testament, and found them not immersions; we have analyzed hastily the allusions and the narrations of the New Testament, and found in them no immersion; we have turned to pure tradition, and general consent, and found that the former repudiates, and the latter does not exclusively sustain, immersion. Immersion, then, is not baptism; for he is an illogical reasoner, who first declares that immersion is not authorized by Scripture, that it does not express the idea which the divine Mind intended it to symbolize, and then declares that the form is indifferent. If our reasons are sound, our conclusion is inevitable; that affusion *alone* meets the divine purpose, and fulfils, formally, the divine command. We may indeed admit that the obedient intention may, through the divine condescension, be accepted; so that, notwithstanding the formal defect, God may sanction it as *done*, and not to be repeated. But it may be most gravely doubted, whether an administrator, who understands the subject, is justifiable in performing immersion. If the candidate has a conscience to be indulged, the minister has a conscience to be maintained. While, however, we thus maintain our own views, we have not, we trust, displayed any illiberality toward the maintainers of other views. We have purposely avoided every sectarian appellation, for advocates of immersion are found, perhaps, in every denomination. May God pour upon us the gentle baptisms of his Holy Spirit. Amen.

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* For most of the following facts the authorities may be found in Chapin's Primitive Church.

SERMON XXX.

The Resurrection.

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"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"—1 Cor. xv, 55.

CHRISTIANITY is divine. It imbodies the noblest sentiments and the loftiest aspirations of the human heart. While surveying this world of life and death, and consigning to the tomb "lover and friend," we must long for the resurrection and reanimation of their faded forms, the immortality of their spirits, and a blissful and eternal reunion in a more glorious sphere. Of time as well as of space, of the departed as of the living, it can be truly said,—

> "'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view;"

as time but hallows their memory, while it renders our affections more tender and deep. Surely, then, these feelings, natural and deathless, may be gratified in a future life.

Philosophy has oscillated to extremes, now attaching too much relative importance to the corporeal, and now to the spiritual, nature of man; now maintaining that he is a mere physical being, and now contemning his physical nature, to exalt, ostensibly, the spiritual; yet inferring from each view, paradoxical as it may seem, that the body shall not live again, by falsely assuming that our physical nature is of an order too inferior to have a future existence.

While it is plain that the properties of matter and spirit are almost wholly unlike, and that, consequently, their essence is as much dissimilar; and while it is equally plain from those properties that spirit is the superior, it is as plain that matter will for ever exist as that spirit will; and as the physical nature of man is allied to the earth, and his spiritual to heaven, a reunion of both will adapt him to the "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." As science induces us to believe that the material of the heavens and the earth is nearly homogeneous, and made by one Hand for similar beings, it is highly probable, from the shadowing renovations of vegetation, of days, of seasons, and of years, that the human body, composed of the same materials as the earth and the heavens, shall, at some future period, be renovated with them. This renewal is confirmed by the consideration, that what is true of all other beings, is, in all probability, true of man—that he was made to be, as a whole, mortal or immortal. Hence all the unanswerable arguments that prove the immortality of the soul sustain the resurrection of the body, and the immortality of the one stands or falls with the resurrection of the other; and hence also those errorists who deny the resurrection verge to a denial of any future being.

The resurrection was denied by most of the Grecian schools of philosophy, and by the Greeks in general, when our text was written; hence Paul found the Christian converts at Corinth peculiarly liable to be swerved from the faith on this cardinal point. Indeed, some among them had said already, "There is no resurrection of the dead." To refute their error and vindicate a literal resurrection constitute the scope and design of a long chapter, replete with the most masterly demonstrations of this vital subject that are to be found recorded in the whole book of God.

In explaining the text it is necessary to remark, that here, as in other passages, the relation between the resurrection of the body and the immortality of the soul is represented to be so intimate, that not only is there an easy and natural transition from one to the other, but the denial of the resurrection seems to be regarded as involving a denial of any future existence; for not only did the "Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit," but Paul himself would imply as much, *were not the resurrection true*, in the chapter from which our text is selected, where, to his own interrogation, "What advantageth it me, if the dead rise not?" he replies, in the very language of the Epicureans, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

The first clause of our text, "O death, where is thy sting?" obviously refers to the death of the body, but it doubtless looks forward to the scenes which lie beyond the general resurrection, when, as the apostle had just proved, corporeal death should have terminated for ever—when, in the language of the last clause of the verse preceding, "death is swallowed up in victory." In the last interrogation of the text, "O grave, where is thy victory?" it appears, from the following considerations, that allusion is had to the destruction of the state and place of departed spirits in which they now exist, and will exist until the resurrection; for the original, here translated grave, is *hades*, which, both in its primitive signification, and in its usual acceptation among all writers, sacred and profane, means, not the receptacle of the bodies, but that of the souls, of men; and, in accordance with this import, is, in the Scriptures, applied to the soul of Christ as well as to "the rich man," although it is generally applied, in the New Testament, to the state and place of the wicked. Again, hades is to be destroyed at the final judgment, and be succeeded by the lake of fire; for it is written, "Death and hell," *hades*, "and whosoever was not found written in the book of life, were cast into the lake of fire." We adopt, then, the marginal reading, and thus glide easily and naturally from the destruction of death to that of the coeval and coextending *hades*, and exclaim with the apostle, "Death, where thy sting? Hades, where thy victory?"

We invite attention to two points:

I. DEATH.

II. ITS TERMINATION.

First, then, of death, in its *nature*, *origin*, *extent*, and *effects*.

Life in organized beings is a principle antagonistic to a tendency in bodies to decomposition, for when it is withdrawn they decay and dissolve. Physical *death*, then, is the immediate result of the separation of the vital element from its tenement; and life, as it resists the tendencies of the body, must be different from the body, and not a property of it: so that death consists not in the destruction of a property of matter, but in the abstraction of an element itself. This is true of the lower as well as of the higher forms of animated existences.

We need not inquire whether man has an animal life in common with inferior beings, as well as a nobler life allied to angels, although both physiology and Scripture seem to favor the supposition; but simply determine the *origin* and cause of death, as affecting the human race. Here let us premise, that the question is not whether brutes were made mortal, or will share in a resurrection, although they afford no indications of having been formed for immortality, but for a limited period of enjoyment, and then to pass away; the question is not, Had man remained unfallen, would he have lived for ever on the earth, or would he have been translated? nay, the question is not, in strictness, Was man created mortal? although this, as we shall subsequently show, is in the highest degree improbable; but it is this: *Did sin cause the death of the first pair, and through them that of our race?*

The introduction of sin into the world by man is explicitly and repeatedly assigned, by the sacred writers, as the sole *cause* of death. "Sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men." "By one man's offense death reigned by one." "By man came death." "In Adam all die." It may be objected, that some, if not all, of these quotations refer to spiritual death; they may, but they include a reference to the body, because they are not restricted to the moral death of the soul, and mean death in general, that of the body as well as that of the soul. We are aware that this position has been strenuously denied, and that it has been affirmed that the human body was originally created mortal; this, however, rests on no solid foundation, for the only passage that can be tortured to seem to support it is this: "The creature was made subject to vanity." To interpret this of the *original* constitution of man, is to do violence to the passage, and those in connection with it; is to deny that God made man "very good," and most pointedly to contradict our previous citations from the same book of Romans, which we have shown prove that sin, and sin alone, was the cause of death. Failing here, and tacitly discarding revelation, reason has been appealed to, as if her voice would be raised against the voice of her God. Well, what is it declared that reason says? Why, forsooth, that it is not probable that our bodies were created to be immortal. But why not probable? Is not God wholly good? Yes. Did he not make man wholly good? Yes. Should that which is wholly good necessarily suffer the pains of death? No. Then man was so made that he was not necessitated to suffer and die? Yes. On this point, then, as on every other, reason, as far as we can hear her voice, harmonizes with revelation. But, continues the objector, did you not intimate that brutes were not to live for ever? We did; yet they might, and in all probability would, had not man sinned, and the ground, with all upon it, been cursed for his sake, have passed away painless as the foliage of autumn; for while we contend that misery in life and death could not have, at creation, been allotted to any by the Creator, and that each order of beings was formed to be wholly mortal or immortal, we at the same time admit that change is an element in the original constitution of things, and that inferior beings were made to be mortal, though not to suffer, as superior were to be immortal.

Death *extends*, as our quotations proved, to all the fallen race of man; we say fallen, for our Saviour was in his human nature unfallen; he "knew no sin," and of course was not *naturally* subject to death, although he voluntarily subjected himself to it, "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death." Nor does the translation of Enoch and Elijah conflict with these views of the cause and universality of death; for the fact of their translation, notwithstanding they were fallen beings, proves that, had man remained unfallen, he would not have died, since, if God revoked the sentence of death already passed upon two fallen men, he surely would not have pronounced it upon man unfallen, and consequently more holy. "Death," then, has "reigned by one," as "the king of terrors," in every age and clime, and will reign until "the last trump." Nor will the millennial state form an exception, however much the salutary influence of Christian principles, the extension of physiological knowledge, and, above all, the blessing of Heaven, may contribute to make "the days of my people as the days of a tree." Not until the final resurrection will the prediction of the last and great prophet of the Lord be fulfilled, that "there shall be no more death."

The whole earth, therefore, is the empire, and time the duration, of the reign of death. Yes, the world is the great charnel-house of generations of ages, and every wind of heaven wafts the cries of orphans, the moans of widows, the sighs of the distressed, the groans of the dying, and the weepings and wailings around the biers and the graves of the dead. Thanks be unto God, there is not only a limit to the continuance of these heart-rending agonies, but, more, the dead shall live again; for Christ, who "by the grace of God tasted death for every man," is "the last Adam, a quickening spirit." "Death, where is thy sting?"

II. *The termination of death.*

Under this division we include the *fact* of the resurrection, as proved by the Scriptures and by eye-witnesses; its *nature and extent;* the *mode* of the resurrection; the *nature of the resurrection body;* the *universality* of the resurrection; its *time;* the *agency* by which it is effected; and its *consequences.*

1. The future existence of the body was taught to the antediluvians when "Enoch was translated, that he should not see death." A few centuries after the deluge, Abraham, when called by God to offer his beloved son, Isaac, as a sacrifice, accounted "that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." Job exclaims, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." David says, "My flesh shall rest in hope; for ... neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." "Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection." With "a chariot of fire, and horses of fire ... Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." Heaven opens to receive the whole of a good man. Christ raised the only son of a widow of Nain, the only daughter of Jairus, and Lazarus, from death; and, by his own resurrection, became "the first fruits of them that slept." "Many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many;" as if rushing from all parts of the world to Christ, their resurrection and life, eager to join in his triumph over death, to ascend with him to the portals of heaven, to swell the shout of the adoring heavenly hosts, as on the celestial battlements they saw the glorified personage of the Son of God reascend, escorted by the noblest of the redeemed, while heaven resounded,

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in."

A belief in the future existence of the body appears not to have been confined anciently to those who basked in the direct beams of revelation. Astronomy hung around the heavens forms of the deified. It was reported for popular belief that Romulus had been transferred to heaven.

Two circumstances may have led some philosophers to discard the resurrection: *one*, that the body is composed of unintelligent earthy elements, and consequently unworthy of reanimation—an inference false, because it regards the body aside from its connection with the soul, and overlooks the complex nature of man, formed to be immortal in body if immortal in soul. The *second* circumstance is the present mortality of the body. The denial of the resurrection in consequence of this fact is unwarrantable, because moral considerations, such as rendering a reward at the judgment to the whole man, as he had conducted in this life, are paramount to physical, and, of course, should prevail over them; and these seem to pledge immortality to the whole man.

Passing to establish the resurrection from the Scriptures, we remark, that as we have before proved that death came upon men as an effect of the transgression of Adam, and as the Scriptures declare "that Christ died for our sins," it follows inevitably, if the atonement is coextensive with the fall, and the resurrection of the body unconditional—positions so plain as not to require proof—it follows, we say, *that the bodies of all will be raised;* or, in the language of the context, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Again, the prophetic predictions that Christ should rise from the dead are very explicit: "My flesh shall rest in hope . . . for neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption." "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin . . . he shall prolong his days." "In the third day he will raise us up."

The historical evidence of the resurrection of Christ is overwhelming. He was seen *eleven* times at least, between his resurrection and ascension. The four evangelists record the fact, and circumstances attending it. Peter boldly affirmed it on the day of Pentecost, to thousands, in the very city and near the very time of its occurrence, and frequently on other occasions. Women, "last at the cross, first at the sepulchre," shared in the joy of beholding their Saviour risen. Thomas saw and believed. James, the eleven apostles, and above five hundred brethren at once, saw him at different times. Stephen saw "the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." Paul, his most learned and bitter persecutor, saw and acknowledged his Lord, robed in his risen glory. Lastly, when all the other apostles, and thousands of other saints, had sealed their testimony to the fact of our Saviour's resurrection with their blood, John, the beloved disciple, after the lapse of nearly a century from our Saviour's incarnation, saw him when he was banished to the solitary Isle of Patmos for his testimony to the verity of our Lord's resurrection, and exulted to hear him say, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." Barnabas, who, according to Eusebius, was one of the seventy disciples; Clement of Rome, another fellow-laborer of the apostle Paul; Ignatius and Polycarp, cotemporaries of the apostle John, themselves martyrs for proclaiming the resurrection; besides a host of writers and martyrs in succeeding centuries, not to mention the voice and faith of the church, all concur to place beyond a doubt the fact of the resurrection of Christ. Hence, as a resurrection from the dead has actually occurred in the person of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of mankind in general is thereby rendered probable; yes, almost certain; for if one human body has been raised by the power of God, why will he not raise others? especially as that, with the exception of the first offending pair, our race are mortal in consequence of their mere physical connection with them; in accordance with the universal law of nature, that like produces its like—from mortals, mortals spring.

2. Of the *nature and extent* of the resurrection, we affirm, that it consists in the living again of all the human bodies that shall have died, from Adam down to the blast of "the last trump," as is certain from the context and other portions of the word of God. "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." "Death is swallowed up in victory." "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." "All that are in the graves . . . shall

come forth." "There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust."

Equally certain is it that all which *appropriately* and *exclusively* belongs to any human body *at its death* will rise again; otherwise the resurrection of a body will not be coextensive with its death; and, as it cannot be pretended that a part only of the body became mortal by the original transgression, and as it will be admitted that the death of Christ, which procured our resurrection, was for our whole lapse, it follows that our whole body will live again. This is also morally certain from the resurrection of the entire body of Christ, which "saw no corruption;" for if his unfallen natural body was all raised, then, as he is the "Saviour of the body," ours must be raised "like unto his glorious body." So believed the sound and sainted Fisk.

This view, it will be perceived, is at variance with the theory which supposes that a certain part only, constituting the "identity," as it is termed, will be raised—a theory which denies the resurrection of that part of the body which is not a part of the "identity." Against this theory we urge, first, the fact that it is not alluded to or countenanced by the word of God; secondly, that it is not sustained by the point upon which it must mainly rely, the fact that not all of a seed deposited in the ground reappears in the new plant; for neither our Saviour nor Paul has indicated that an analogy *on this point* exists between vegetation and the resurrection. They simply allude to the general analogy between the reproduction of grain and the resurrection of the body; but, as analogies are usually slight resemblances, a perfect and minute similarity is not to be expected. Thirdly, the theory, by denying the resurrection of a part of the body, prepares the way for the infidelity of a second step—an entire denial of the resurrection. This leads, as shown above, to the denial of the immortality of the soul, thus plunging us into the darkest depths of infidelity, and into the annihilation of our conscious existence. The resurrection of the whole body, then, and the immortality of the soul, must both stand or both fall.

Does any suppose that the soul takes upon itself a spiritual body at or after death, while its original tenement still lies in the grave, and that this is all the soul will ever occupy? He denies the resurrection; for never, then, will "death be swallowed up in victory." Does any consider the resurrection to be of minor importance? So much of Christ's mission he undervalues. Does any object to the resurrection of the whole body, because it is, when alive, in a state of perpetual change? So was Adam's before he fell; so was our Saviour's; but the resurrection is not to affect and overcome changes not caused by the fall, but death, which was caused by it. Is it pleaded that the body, after its death, assumes mineral, vegetable, and animal forms? True; yet nothing not human is to have a resurrection, and cannot, therefore, in the least prevent our resurrection. Besides, if we even suppose the resurrection of brutes, the less, we must admit that of men, the greater. Is it imagined that some parts of human bodies will become constituents of parts of other human bodies? It may be so; but God can as easily assign what was *originally and exclusively its own* to each, as he can perform any other act.

These are all the objections of this kind that can be even plausibly urged; for the supposition that any one human body will be, at its death, wholly composed of what belonged to another at its death, is so utterly improbable, that, if we were not to believe in the interposition of divine providence to prevent its occurrence, it could not be urged as even a slight probability against the resurrection of every human body. Thus all objections are swept away; and what to one, while regarding merely physical considerations, may appear at first sight improbable, will be found, from its metaphysical and religious connections, a moral, and almost a mathematical, certainty.

3. We pass to the *manner* of the resurrection, as introduced in the context by the interrogation, "How are the dead raised up?" and remark, that both the general acceptation of the interrogative Πῶς, how, and the argument based upon it in the next three verses, prove that it refers to the "*modus operandi*," the mode or manner of the resurrection; for, as our Saviour had said of himself before his own death, and in allusion to it—"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit"—so the apostle replies to the ignorant objector, "Fool, that which *thou* sowest is not

quickened except it die," or, is not made alive, if it may not have died. Every one acquainted with vegetable physiology must know that the germ is at first nourished by the decomposition and death of the seed. Here, then, is a real analogy, not for the germ theory of the resurrection, which maintains that a part of the body, called the germ, never dies; not to prove that the resurrection body will die, because the future inferior vegetable will; but to show, that as vegetables must die in order to live again, so must the human body. The apostle gives *another* analogical illustration in the next verse. As he had just shown that in vegetables and man death must precede a resuscitation, so he now shows that there will be a change in vegetables and men when they shall be revived, by subjoining, "And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body which shall be," or the body which it shall become, "but bare grain; it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain." A *third* analogy consists in the fact that every resurrection, whether vegetable or human, is effected solely by the power of God, nature having no power of herself, as is implied in the next verse: "But God giveth it a body, as it hath pleased him, and to every seed," or to each of the seeds, "his," or its, "own body." Surely if God gives a resurrection to vegetables, the less, he will to man, the greater.

4. We are now prepared for the second interrogative objection, "With what body do they come?" or the *nature* of the resurrection body. Here, too, we follow the apostle in real analogies, where, by adducing the fact that substances essentially the same assume different aspects, he prepares the way for a belief that the resurrection body may put on a new form and yet remain of the same material. "All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds." And hence, as the vegetable had just now furnished analogies to illustrate the mode of the resurrection, so now the animal kingdom, by the widely different forms of flesh in man, beast, fish, and bird, elucidates the change that is to pass upon the body when raised. Nor is this all. The beings that people the heavens and the earth converge their analogy upon the same point; for "there are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial; but

the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another." Nay, more; the apostle adduces a third analogy on this second question, as he had on the first, by declaring that "there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory," or splendor. How various the aspects of light! Since, then, matter now exists in so many forms, the human body may assume a second form when raised.

The application of these analogies is worthy of omnipotence, perfectly adapted to the noblest desires of the heart, and in exact correspondence with the ways of God, which proceed from great to greater, as created beings can fathom the depths of divine revelations. But hear the apostle apply his own arguments: "*So also* is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body."

Having shown that natural substances are susceptible of an endless variety of modifications, even when composed of the same ultimate elements, the apostle proceeds to prove that the resurrection body will be a *spiritual* one; or, in his own words, "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." This position he sustains by adducing a passage from Genesis to prove the original constitution of man: "And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul;" though formed with an animal nature, was destined for immortality; "the last Adam," or Christ, he adds, "was made a quickening," or life-producing, "spirit."

Christ will therefore make the body of man, at the resurrection, like his own, a spiritual body. We are not, however, to infer that the resurrection body will of itself be intelligent, for spirit, as well as matter, exists in a great variety of modes of being; nor is intelligence necessary to every mode of spiritual existence, as the cessation of consciousness, when "the spirit of the beast goeth downward to the earth," clearly proves.

The apostle corroborates his argument by implying, that as Christ is superior to Adam, so he will cause our resurrection bodies to surpass their original state, according to the progressive order which God has established.

"Howbeit that was not first which was spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven," where all is spiritual. "As is the earthy," Adam, "such are they also that are earthy," his descendants: "and as is the heavenly," Christ, "such are they also that are heavenly," "the children of God, being children of the resurrection." "And as we have borne the image of the earthy," Adam, "we shall also bear the image of the heavenly," Christ. Yes, the body shall participate in the affections of the soul in heaven, as it had on the earth. "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." "We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him." Our bodies will assume a new state at the resurrection, and at the same time consist of the same elements that they do now. Job refers to this when in the depths of affliction he exclaims, "In my flesh shall I see God ... though my reins be consumed within me;" and Paul declares "that flesh and blood," the body in its present state, "cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption."

5. The change will be *universal.* "We shall all be changed;" that is, all who have not been previously raised from the dead, whether they have died, or are alive at the resurrection, will be changed, good and bad, for there will be a resurrection of the "unjust" as well as of the "just," "and many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

We should not conclude that none will have been finally raised before this general resurrection. Enoch and Elijah have been translated; our Saviour has ascended, accompanied, perhaps, by "many bodies of the saints which slept, arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection." Moses as well as Elias may have appeared in a glorified body when Christ "was transfigured," for they "appeared in glory," and the whole transaction is, as appears from its circumstances and connection, typical of the resurrection from the dead, or heavenly state of the risen righteous. In consonance with these partial resurrections, at very important periods in the history of the church, we are, on the whole, inclined to the opinion that there will be a resurrection of *martyrs* at the commencement of the millennium, because the phrase, "they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years," is directly contrasted with the declaration that "the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished;" and as the latter quotation must be taken in a literal acceptation, so must the former. To this "first resurrection" Paul, with the crown of martyrdom before him, *may* refer, when he desires to "know the power of Christ's resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means he might attain unto the resurrection of the dead," or *from* the dead.

The general change will be instantaneous—"in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." Of the origin of the universe it is recorded, "God spake, and it was done;" so, at this universal renovation of the bodies of men, of the heavens, and of the earth, the Almighty will renew *at once*, thereby, as at creation, demonstrating most strongly his omnipotence.

6. The *time* of the resurrection will be "at the last trump," when, in the language of the Apocalypse, it will be declared, "Thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth."

7. The *agent* by which the resurrection is to be effected is the Holy Spirit, operating through the atonement of Christ, which procures his agency,—"But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." "It is the Spirit that quickeneth,"—although, as at creation, so in the resurrection, each person in the trinity is often spoken of as an agent.

8. Lastly, we approach the *consequences*, the renovation of heaven, earth, man; triumph over death; the "resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment;" the augmentation of happiness to the righteous, of misery to the wicked; the congregating of all the good in one place, of

all the bad in another; the eternal shout of saints, 'O, death, where thy sting? O hades, where thy victory?" Let the righteous hold on his way, and the wicked beware.

SERMON XXXI.

The Appearance of Evil.

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"Abstain from all appearance of evil."—1 Thess. v, 22.

THE general tendency of the human mind is to place too high an estimate upon outward appearances. Hence outward religion comes to be magnified at the expense of inward holiness, and some are led to practice great austerities, and to affect sanctimonious airs, when there is but little or no religious principle in the conscience, or love of God in the heart. To guard against a merely outward religion, or a hypocritical show of piety, great stress is laid in the Bible upon the religion of the heart, and all mere formality or outward morality is represented as abominable in the sight of God. "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth anything, but a new creature." "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations: incense is an abomination unto me; the new-moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting." Isa. i, 11–13.

These and similar passages place so much stress upon the state of the heart, and so pointedly discard mere formalism, that a class of minds are driven to the opposite extreme. If they do not wholly discard outward religion, they at least underrate it, and, by the same process of reasoning, become blind to the appearances of evil. The doctrine which they maintain is, that *appearances are nothing—it is with the heart that God has to do.*

The object of the apostle in the text is to give *appearances* their real importance. He consequently connects a precept upon the subject with several other injunctions, all of which relate to inward and practical godliness, and follows it with a prayer for the *entire sanctification* of those whom he addresses, in a way to show most clearly and conclusively that abstinence from "all *appearance* of evil" is a necessary accompaniment, or an essential attribute, of an entirely sanctified state. With these remarks upon the general aspects and real importance of the subject presented in the text, I shall proceed to illustrate and apply it: in doing which, I shall *first* explain the import of the precept in the text, and, *secondly*, show its real importance.

I. The first thing, then, which I propose, is to explain the import of the precept: "Abstain from all appearance of evil."

Moral evil itself is, in many ways, interdicted in the Scriptures. In the text before us, however, it is not moral evil itself, but its *appearance—εἴδους, image, shape,* or *form*—that we are admonished to abstain from. This is the view of the text most generally adopted by commentators, and the one we think the best sustained, though some critics give it another turn. But, as I have no time for verbal criticism, I shall not enter into the argument.

There may be the appearance, or image, of evil, where no evil is intended, and where there is no evil in fact, further than the mere appearance is itself evil. This may exhibit itself,

1. *In our actions.*

Several instances will now be given which may stand for the whole. In our intercourse with society we may aim to show a proper regard to men of the world, and associate with them, for their improvement or for our own. Our business relations may seem to require that we should seek the company of such as are essentially worldly in their spirit, and we may think to exert a good influence over them: while these associations may *appear*, to every one else besides ourselves, to be the result of elective affinity. Those who look upon us may honestly suppose that we seek the company of worldly minded persons because we prefer it—because our spirit is congenial with theirs. All *appearances* may go to justify this conclusion, and we may presume men generally will not go beyond the first and plainest indications for an explanation of our conduct.

In our pursuits we may seem to ourselves to be merely "diligent in business"—only to pay a laudable and proper attention to our temporal interests: while our zeal and energy in the prosecution of our worldly plans and enterprises may seem to contravene the Saviour's prohibition of taking thought for the morrow, and laying up treasure upon earth; our whole course of conduct may indicate that we are principally, if not wholly, concerned for the things which perish with the using.

In our dress and equipage we may merely intend to conform to the world in things indifferent, or seek our own convenience and comfort to an allowable extent: while those around us gather that we think more of gay apparel and elegant furniture and fixtures than we do of the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price.

In our contributions to public or charitable objects, or in our expenditures, we may seem to ourselves to be merely liberal, and to avoid parsimony: but we may appear to others prodigal.

Finally. In our bearing toward the other sex we may think ourselves merely courteous, when to others we appear amorous. Under this head I only intend to embrace the more slight deviations from what would, by a correct taste, be considered due and proper reserve. I have no reference to those who are in the habit of gossiping, romping, and flirting with the other sex; much less do I refer to those whose bearing toward the other sex is lascivious or amorous. Their course is expressly forbidden in the word of God, and their character is not to be mistaken. The evil is not merely in appearance, it is in the heart, and perverts the whole soul. But persons who indulge in these practices not unfrequently endeavor to keep themselves in countenance among decent and religious people by saying, "I mean no harm—I am of an ardent temperament—this is my way." Ah! and this too is *the way* of the rake and the debauchee—and it is also *the way to hell!* The least appearance which can be fairly construed into the want of the strictest chastity should be avoided.

Or, to take the reverse of all these instances, for we are not merely exposed in one direction, we may find the danger of becoming an occasion of stumbling to others by an opposite course of conduct.

We may shun worldly society for the purpose of avoiding its contamination, thinking that we only obey the injunction to "come out" from the world "and be separate:" when we seem to others to have lost all sympathies with men, and to hold them at an undue distance. We may seem to have forgotten our social relations, and our obligations growing out of the social state—that while we are required to scatter our light abroad, we are hiding it under a bushel.

We may design merely to live above the world, and to carry out our Saviour's injunction to take no thought for the morrow: while we may seem to all the world to be neglectful of our business—to be idle, and criminally negligent of the duties and obligations imposed upon us as citizens.

While we merely intend to be simple and plain in our dress and equipage, it may seem to others that we are making religion to consist too much in plainness and simplicity of apparel, furniture, &c.

We may think ourselves merely economical—making laudable efforts to acquire, by proper diligence, all we consistently can, and merely saving all we can, or keeping what we acquire for some good use: but others may suppose us *penurious* and *niggardly.*

Or, finally, we may suppose ourselves correct in our conduct and bearing toward the other sex, when we appear to others to want for them due respect and consideration.

It is no part of my present business to determine upon which side of the happy medium the greatest evil lies, but to show that there is danger upon either side sufficiently threatening to call for the greatest vigilance. One may be more exposed in one direction, and another in another. Different natural constitutions and temperaments are exposed to a different class of temptations and a different class of offenses. All offenses are not equally flagrant, nor are all tendencies to evil equally dangerous. But as the smallest offense mars the Christian character, and the least appearance of evil may be injurious in many ways, it is of great importance that we should all be well instructed into the character of our liabilities to err, that we may be thoroughly fortified against every species of danger.

2. The appearance of evil may be exhibited *in our words.*

In our conversation we may design merely to be free and pleasant—it may be our object to render ourselves agreeable companions and friends, by furnishing those with whom we associate with a little entertainment or innocent amusement: but we may appear to others to be decidedly *trifling*—utterly void of the gravity which becomes a Christian.

When our feelings are interested, we may suppose we only speak with an earnestness which becomes the importance of the subject—we may acquire a habit of speaking in a loud tone of voice, and maintaining what we conceive to be truth and justice with great, but still with becoming, vehemence: when, to all but ourselves, we appear to be in a storm of passion.

In reproving vice, and in censuring evil actions, we may design merely to call things by their proper names. We may even suppose it would be a species of hypocrisy not to employ strong and offensive epithets when we make mention of the vices or corruptions of particular individuals or classes of offenders. But, in the estimation of others, our language may appear discourteous, uncivil, and, indeed, absolutely insulting; and may be supposed to proceed from anger, recklessness, or at least an utter want of the charity which "hopeth all things."

We may only intend to use plain language in speaking of delicate subjects. We may think merely to avoid an affectation of modesty, by using old-fashioned Anglo-Saxon words upon certain occasions, and in relation to certain subjects: when our style of conversation may appear to others to originate from an unchaste imagination, and to indicate the absence of that purity of mind and character essential to Christianity.

We may suppose we merely fill our place in the social circle, and converse, when in company, only so much as is profitable and interesting to others, and as, considering our circumstances, they ought to be willing to hear: while others consider us opinionative and obtrusive, if not an absolute nuisance in every social circle. To them we may seem to be vainly puffed up with high notions of our own wisdom, and utterly destitute of that modesty and humility which are always more ready to hear than be heard—to learn than to instruct others.

In speaking of the faults of absent individuals, we may design merely to condemn the wrong itself, or to warn others of approaching evil, which, under certain limitations and restrictions, would not be wrong. But we may appear to others to be dealing in slander—they may suppose we design to give publicity to what we relate from motives of jealousy or hatred.

These are specimens of the modes in which we may "offend in word" when we do not design it, and when there is no evil in our words or conversation except in the mere *appearance.*

3. There may be the appearance of evil *in our spirit.*

We may, as we suppose, pursue our favorite plans only with becoming zeal; dreading a cold, dead, inactive condition of mind, we may fan our feelings up to a high degree of ardor—and think we merely meet the conditions of St. Paul's rule, that "it is good to be zealously affected in a good thing:" when we appear to others to be hot-headed ultraists—always under the influence of intemperate zeal—and, in fact, to be rank fanatics.

Our aim may be to cultivate a true elevation of spirit, which is above mean compliances—to exhibit the true nobleness and dignity of an enlightened Christian and an honorable man. But to others it may seem that we have too high views of ourselves—that we are under the influence of a *haughty* spirit, which looks *down* upon all other men as of an inferior grade.

We may think only to be prompt, ready, persevering. But we may seem to others to be hasty, rash, and obstinate.

And here, as in a former case, we may notice an opposite class of faults to which we are liable.

We may only study to be sufficiently dispassionate and self-possessed—not to be sensitive, unduly excited, or hurried on by an intemperate zeal: when to others we appear to be stoical—as cold as an iceberg—destitute of all the sympathies of humanity, and utterly without the heart of a brother or a friend.

We may only strive to be of an humble and meek spirit—to avoid all the *hauteur* which savors so much of self-esteem and contempt of others: when, to the critical eye of the world, we may appear cowardly and mean-spirited—without any just appreciation of our powers or our rights; or, if not, without the mental strength or moral courage to take our proper position in society, and to maintain our own rights.

And, finally, we may think to be merely dispassionate, deliberate, and sufficiently careful to look before we leap—not to be hasty in spirit: while we appear to be the veriest *drones*—always behind the times—never ready for an emergency until it is passed—in short, like the foolish virgins, who, when they came to the door, found it shut against them.

These simple illustrations are designed to show that there may be the *appearance* of evil where there is no evil in the intention, and where there may be no evil in reality except in the *appearance.* I do not mean to say, however, that where there is the *appearance* of evil there may be no *real evil in* the *appearance;* but, that there would be no evil in fact if it were not for the *appearance* of it. A man who acts in ignorance, or under some unfortunate bias, may go astray exceedingly, and his conduct be the cause of much mischief to himself and others, and yet his intentions may have been pure. And in this case the whole course of conduct might have been right and proper if he were a solitary being in the universe, or if there were not ignorant, weak, prejudiced, and wicked men around him to take impressions from his example. These remarks are designed merely for necessary present explanation; they will be resumed and expanded hereafter.

I come now to the next general proposition.

II. I proceed to assign reasons for this precept.

1. There are reasons which affect ourselves.

Falling into evil appearances generally results from the want of a correct taste, a well-disciplined conscience, or of knowledge, or due care and watchfulness. These are all defects, which, if they are not remedied, will grow and ripen into habits which will mar and ruin the Christian character. It may fairly be doubted whether any Christian can be blind to the aspects of his own character, or careless of the impressions which he makes upon others, without soon becoming perverted in his moral feelings, and losing both the love and the fear of God.

Again: if an assurance that our position before the world is such as makes the right impression, and does honor to our Christian profession and character, is a source of happiness, then inattention to appearances must occasion a diminution of our religious enjoyment. We consequently have a reason, from the consideration of our own *enjoyment*, for a due regard to the injunction of the text.

But, finally, our usefulness is intimately concerned in the due observance of the precept in the text. Our usefulness depends upon our influence, and our influence upon the impression we make upon the public mind. It should be well considered, that it is the appearance, the image, the form, that makes the impression. All the data which men have upon which to make up an opinion of our character is derived from *appearances*. They only judge of our motives from appearances. Motives are in themselves intangible—they are only known by outward indications. And when men see in us—in our actions, in our words, or in our spirit and temper—the *appearance* of evil, they most generally conclude that *real evil* is there. We may justify or extenuate our conduct on the ground that we mean no harm—that our motives are right; but how is the world to know anything about our motives only as *appearances* develop them? The essence of sin is not visible—it is only by its indications or appearances that men recognize its existence in others—the *appearance* is all that is *visible*. Hence it is clear that in proportion as the "*appearance* of evil" mars our exterior religious character, we lay a foundation for the inference that there is evil within us—that we are not worthy professors of Christianity. And, as a matter of course, this conclusion, in the same proportion in which it is justified by the indications which go, in the view of the world, to make up our religious character, will injure our influence and lessen our moral power. As, then, we would be useful—as, to some extent, our own personal interests, both in this world and the world to come, depend upon our usefulness—it becomes us to avoid anything which would draw our religious character into doubt, and so necessarily abridge our usefulness.

From the whole we conclude, that we have reasons derived from our own highest interests to abstain from all appearance of evil.

2. A due regard for the honor and glory of God will furnish us with another argument in favor of the duty enjoined in the text.

It will not be questioned but that we honor God in proportion as we exhibit a practical illustration of the purity of the Christian character before the world. All eyes are upon us, and all have a right to expect that we will carry out the precepts of Christ in our conduct, conversation, and spirit; and the ungodly will associate the blemishes which appear in our lives with the religion we profess. In vain shall we protest against this; in vain will we attempt to make men see the difference between the lives of professing Christians and Christianity itself. Though there is such a difference, and one which all ought to see and acknowledge, yet the fact that many will not see and acknowledge it is a strong reason why professing Christians should live "as becometh the gospel of Christ." We should give no occasion to "the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme," or by our errors "cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of;" but should, by our "chaste conversation, put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." If sinners will dishonor God and reproach his cause, let them do it of mere malice, without the least provocation on our part. They may censure us and misconstrue our motives without any just occasion—where there is not even the smallest appearance of evil. If they do this, the responsibility is wholly their own. But if there is in our lives the appearance of evil, though it is no good ground of justification for those who make it an occasion of contemning Christ and his gospel, yet it does involve us in a tremendous responsibility. It is possible, but for the temptation which our conduct furnishes, the corruptions of their hearts might not break out so violently, or might take a less offensive direction. A slight appearance of evil in us may be the spark which, falling into the magazine, causes a fearful explosion.

The honor and glory of God, then, furnish a reason of vast importance and weight in favor of our abstaining from all appearance of evil.

3. A regard to the well-being of other men furnishes a strong reason for the requirement of the text.

In discussing this point it may first be premised, that all example consists in *appearances*. We do not see into men's hearts—we cannot see their thoughts, their motives, nor their intentions. It is the outward expression or symbol which we see. And we judge of what is within upon certain established principles, which indicate a connection between certain classes of signs, or actions, and certain classes of principles, or moral qualities of the heart. It is consequently through the medium of the sign or symbol of wrong that the contagion of sin spreads. It is the sign, then, that makes the impression. It is the appearance of evil that does the mischief, so far as sin is propagated by example. Suppose then two cases, equally strong and striking, in which there is the appearance of evil. In one of these cases the failure is the consequence of ignorance, bad taste, or some constitutional defect, and not of design; in the other case the same actions are the result of wicked principles or purposes. Now what will be the difference as to the impression which these two instances make upon other minds? The appearances are the same, and the principles upon which the judgment is made up are the same. What, then, will prevent the impression from being equally bad? What will hinder the ignorance, or carelessness, or mere bad taste, of the one, from doing as much mischief as the radical wickedness of the other?

Let us not hope that God will work a miracle in order to render harmless the signs of evil which are not the result of design or malice aforethought. Miracles are not ordinarily wrought to prevent evils which might be prevented by proper Christian prudence and discretion. Our examples will go on making their natural and legitimate impression, without the least abatement of the evils which they inflict on account of the innocent motives by which we may have been actuated. It is only when we have used all our diligence and discretion to the best advantage, and acquired a habit of correct judgment and due discrimination between appearances, and we have labored to our utmost to avoid all appearance of evil, that we may confidently hope not to fall into any indiscretion which may injure the spiritual interests of others, or may rationally expect that our mistakes will be so overruled by God that they shall do no harm.

The present argument derives its force from our social relations, and the fact that our character and conduct are constantly exerting an influence, and making impressions upon other minds, either for good or evil. "No one liveth to himself." However obscure our condition in life, however small the circle in which we move, we are constantly contributing to the formation of the character and habits of others. We are leaving traces upon deathless spirits that we are, perhaps, not aware of holding the least connection with, or of being in the least degree responsible for the characters they form or their eternal destiny.

And every appearance of evil which is marked in us is a kind of creation that is never to be annihilated—an evil demon sent out to seduce men to sin, and to curse them with the consequences of sin. By this means our example may be doing the work of the devil, while we are daily saying our prayers, and fondly hoping that we are helping on the cause of God. Let us not forget that it is not with our *motives* that the text has to do; it is with "the appearance of evil"—that by which evil is propagated—that which makes it infectious;—it is the *appearance* which does the mischief to others.

We cannot say, "I am not responsible for consequences, so long as I mean well—let others take care of themselves." One of old once asked, "Am I my brother's keeper?" We live for others, yea, for the world, and not for ourselves alone. And we will be held to a strict accountability for the influence we exert upon the moral character and condition of those around us. Is it nothing to us that, by a little imprudence, or for want of a better understanding of the proprieties of the Christian character, we actually shut up the kingdom of heaven against men? Is it nothing to us that, by our want of Christian vigilance, and thorough mental and moral discipline, we fall into so many improprieties in our behavior as to strengthen the corruptions and weaken the faith of those with whom we hold intercourse, and so endanger their salvation? Would it not be a fearful thing if, for the want of thorough self-knowledge, and a perfect acquaintance with the proper adorning of a Christian's life, we should be the means of hindering one soul in the way to heaven, and thereby rendering the final salvation of that soul doubtful? Is it nothing to us that any portion of our influence should be upon the side of sin, and should do the devil's work? Never—no, never let this be said by a Christian—by one whose very profession binds him under the strongest obligations to do all the good he can—not to hinder any in their religious course, but by all possible means to help on all in the way to heaven.

We occasionally hear persons of a certain class—and some of them high professors of religion too—say, "I don't care what people say about me; I just do what is right, and that is all I care for." Don't care what others say about you? Well, you ought to care. If they speak evil of you from malice, or a persecuting spirit, they involve themselves in a damning sin, and ought to be pitied and prayed for. But if the cause of their bad opinion and censures is to be traced to some indiscretion of yours—to, at least, the "appearance of evil" in your behavior—then you have a real and a serious concern in the matter. If they are thus led to sin, you have furnished them with the temptation, or occasion, without which, possibly, they would not have fallen into the evil; if we, by any fault or defect in our religious character, furnish an occasion for men to sin, we are fearfully responsible, and we ought to be concerned, both for the cause and its results.

Besides, a Christian should never forget that he constitutes a part and parcel of the church, and that, by consequence, his fame and reputation are identified with those of the church. If his character is disparaged, the church suffers—the disgrace of his failures falls upon the church. He is one of the number that is to give the church her character and influence; consequently, if he is in bad odor before the world, in the same proportion the church suffers disparagement. And when the church is defamed and insulted—pierced and left bleeding—has he no *care* for it? Especially when he has furnished the occasion, is it of no concern to him, that the worthy Name by which he is called is blasphemed? This would indeed appear strange and unaccountable, and yet such instances actually occur. But let it always be remarked, that they are not the most devoted Christians—not those who actually live above reproach—that "don't care what others say about them." There is ground of suspicion upon the very face of this species of recklessness.

If, then, our moral and religious example is of any consequence—if it is a matter of any importance that we should not hinder the salvation of sinners, nor cause the weak to stumble—if it is a thing worthy of our serious concern that we should not furnish men with an occasion of sin, nor cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of, it is of great concern to us that we should "abstain from all appearance of evil;" and we have an interest in this precept as high as heaven and as lasting as eternity. Who, then, that wishes to do all the good he can to his fellow-creatures—so far as within him lies to contribute to their conversion and salvation—will be inattentive to this fearfully momentous precept?

I have now briefly presented three reasons for the injunction contained in the text. These reasons are such as go to show the vast importance of this injunction. Hoping that I have succeeded in producing conviction in the minds of all the serious persons I address that the text sets forth a necessary duty—one vital to the interests of our holy Christianity—one applicable to all persons, times, places, and circumstances, and one which is sadly forgotten and neglected by many who profess to be the disciples of Christ; what remains is to draw a few practical inferences from the whole.

1. The first inference which we draw from the doctrine of the text is, that appearances are matters of high importance.

This point has been already so largely illustrated and insisted upon, that little need be added here. The deduction is obvious from all that has been said, and I now make it merely to give it a formal place among the practical conclusions of the discourse. So prone is the human mind to extremes, that it is not unfrequent for a mere dread of formalism, and a high regard for the religion of the heart, to lead to a melancholy neglect of appearances, and to a looseness, or at least a carelessness, in relation to the decencies and proprieties of the Christian character. Many there are among us who need correction, and there are few but may profit by an admonition. A great and good man says: "He that neglects little things shall fall by little and little." And we may certainly calculate that he who does not abstain from the appearance of evil will soon fall into open transgression.

2. We may next infer the reason why so many honest-minded people are so utterly worthless as members of the church.

The reason why persons who mean well, and have a great degree of zeal in the cause of religion, are so often useless lumber in the church, and even sometimes stumbling blocks in the way of sinners, not unfrequently is, that they think too little of appearances. The general aspects of their character are such as to neutralize all their efforts for good. They pull down with one hand all that they build with the other, and often go much further—even destroying the good done by others. They are not open sinners, nor do they designedly omit any duty; but they are headlong, or thoughtless, or ignorant, or obstinate. And through some of these causes, or something of the same class, they give offense to susceptible minds—they absolutely make religion appear offensive, and so create against it an abiding prejudice. There are persons around them without religion who have a far more discriminating judgment, more enlightened views, and a better taste, as to the aspects of a Christian man's behavior, than they have. Such are disgusted and offended with them for what appears to be wrong, and what they think can hardly spring from a right state of heart. And thus they "stumble or are made weak." The same may sometimes be said of exceedingly zealous and high professors of religion. They have much zeal, but little knowledge. They do not seem to be aware that a fiery zeal without proper discretion is a most dangerous element in a man's character. If a man goes wrong, the more fiercely he drives on, the worse. I have sometimes known one person of this class to destroy the most flattering prospects of a revival of God's work—neutralize all that the minister, aided by the whole church, could do, and bring everything to a stand. Something more is necessary to a good and successful laborer in the cause of God than good intentions and great zeal. He that would *win souls* must be *wise.* And he that would be a profitable laborer in any department of Christian duty must abstain from all appearance of evil. When will these mistaken brethren learn that the eyes of the world are upon them—that men take impressions through their eyes and ears, and that we can have no power for good in the church only so far as our actions, words, and spirit, appear in accordance with our profession?

3. We may learn the importance of clear discrimination, an accurate judgment, a tender conscience, and perfect self-knowledge.

These qualities of mind will enable us, in all ordinary cases, to judge correctly as to what would be proper, or otherwise, under any given circumstances. But the power of correct judgment in matters of so much difficulty as the bearing of mere appearances is not to be attained at once and without effort. It may cost us much painful inquiry and diligence. The power of accurate judgment is not ordinarily acquired without much patient thought and observation. He that would have this faculty in its vigor and efficiency, must exercise himself in judging of appearances in view of the great ideal of a *perfect man.* And he must scrutinize his own ways. He must not spare himself. He must perpetually inquire, How will this appear, and how that? What judgment will other men pronounce upon my conduct? How will it impress them? Will it make them better or worse? Will it tend to draw them to the Saviour, or to drive them from him? This inquisitive habit of mind will lead to the most beneficial results. We shall acquire the power of analyzing and comparing appearances, and judging of them, which will save us from many errors and many mortifying failures, and which will give to our character a moral beauty which will command the admiration and respect even of the most splenetic and fastidious of the men of this world with whom we daily converse.

4. We may learn the greatness of our responsibilities.

It is not a difficult matter for a person of ordinary spiritual illumination to be able to determine what contravenes the injunction of the text, and when he is by it convicted of wrong. Offenses against the salutary caution it contains, more generally, perhaps, arise from some negative quality of mind, such as thoughtlessness or ignorance. But due care and diligence would supply the remedy for these deficiencies. And if we neglect so to fashion our lives as that they may exert a saving influence upon the world, are we not slothful servants? Mark, it is not so much some sudden outbreak of the passions, which is the result of surprise, with which the text is concerned, as it is an habitual laxness and indifference to the minutiæ of Christian duty—something to which there may be no designed tendency, but which results from false or defective views of the Christian's character and responsibilities. And if professors of religion will in this manner fall to sleep upon their post—if by mere sloth they will peril the interests of religion and the salvation of souls, will they not have a fearful account to give? Can they expect in the great day to hear the Judge say, "Well done, good and faithful servant?" How will they answer for the mischief which has been occasioned by their criminal indifference to a plain precept of the Bible? O, what sobriety, and vigilance, and prudence, and diligence, are necessary, if we would fully meet the letter and spirit of the text!

5. We may also infer from the doctrine of the text that some sincere but imperfect Christians may be the means of ruining souls, while others, of less, or no, real purity of purpose, may be the means of doing much good.

Let the doctrine which has already been clearly deduced from the text, and which is sustained by sound philosophy and common sense, be borne in mind, namely: that *it is the appearance of evil which does the mischief to society.* Others see only the *appearance* of evil in any case, while God alone sees the thing itself. If, then, we are not cautious to abstain from the appearance of evil, and so are the means of giving a wrong bias to others, or are the occasion of their falling into sin, and into hell, it will be sad indeed. It will not answer for us to say we did not *design* to do harm—the harm is done, and cannot now be repaired. Our general honesty of purpose will not prevent the fatal consequences of our example, much less will it bring back from perdition the souls which we have been the means of ruining for ever. So with all our honesty of purpose, with all our zeal, with all our prayers; such may be our course of living, our habits of intercourse with the world, that we may be the means of sending souls to destruction.

Upon the other hand, some, whose motives are, in part or in whole, selfish and offensive to God, may so thoroughly understand the art of making the right impression, that their examples may be practically beneficial, and they may be the means of saving souls. They abstain from the appearance of evil, although they love evil itself, and cherish it in their hearts. Appearances will not indeed save *them*, but they may instrumentally save others; that is, the signs of truth and purity which they display may be the means, in the hands of God, of bringing men to the knowledge of the truth, and of finally saving them. Let it not be said that this is a merely hypothetical case, which never can actually occur. I doubt not but there are now good and worthy members in the church, and glorified saints in heaven, who were converted by the instrumentality of base hypocrites. Their corruptions were not dormant, but were working in a way not to be observed by the persons referred to, who only saw what appeared to them the image of a true zeal for God and his glory. All they saw was in itself good. It was the expression, the shadowing forth, of true religion. The outward expressions were all of which they could take cognizance, and being such as found a response in their hearts and consciences, they were made the means of awakening in their minds permanent convictions. God, who "can make the wrath of man to praise him," can as easily make his selfishness, and all the other motives of hypocrisy, to promote his honor and the salvation of sinners. But it must not be supposed from this that the good which a real hypocrite sometimes does either procures his pardon, or in the least meliorates his moral character. He is just as wicked, before God, as he would be if he did no good at all; and will, without repentance, have just as hot a place in perdition, and possibly his punishment will be enhanced by that circumstance. It may be an aggravation of his torment in hell to know that he had contributed to the salvation of others.

But, brethren, what a shame it is for us to be outdone by hollow-hearted professors of religion—by the unskillfulness of our labors, or the defects in the aspects of our outward Christian character, actually to harm the cause and ruin souls, while really bad men are often found doing much good! The very supposition of the possibility of all this shows the real importance of the requirement of the text in a very strong light. O, when will we be "wise as serpents and harmless as doves?"—When we learn to "abstain from all appearance of evil."

6. Lastly, we infer the admirable perfection of the instructions we have in the Holy Scriptures.

Every point of duty seems to be covered by the sacred writers. The heart is the great source of evil—as "from the heart proceedeth evil things"—and consequently the corruptions of the heart are objects of special attention.

How the heart is to be cleansed and prepared for a residence of the Holy One, and by what means it is to be guided and governed, are matters clearly set forth. How to govern our actions, and what in our outward conduct is wrong and offensive to God, are sufficiently specified. Both inward and outward sins are pointed out and prohibited; and, finally, as if to complete the system of requirements and duties, we are admonished to shun not only sin itself, but its very *appearance*. Without this there would seem to be a deficiency in the inspired teaching. An avenue would have been left open for the entrance of evil, and the Christian character might have been exceedingly defective without contravening any express precept. As it is, every precaution is taken to fortify us against occasions of falling into sin, or of exerting a bad influence upon others. The directions, if fully carried out, will completely furnish us for the high and responsible position to which we are elevated when taken into the favor and service of God. No doubt will hang over our character. We shall be clear specimens of practical Christianity, practical demonstrations of the purity and power of our divine religion. And what Christian does not wish to have his character and conduct, beyond all controversy and doubt, in accordance with the holy gospel? What good man wishes to be misunderstood and misconstrued—to be thought not so good as he really is, or at least aims to be? Who wishes, by putting himself upon dubious ground in the view of others, to put the Christian profession, or religion itself, upon dubious ground? Who would not be perfect—complete in all the will of God? Here, then, brethren, is our great rule of behavior—the infallible law of propriety: "Abstain from all appearance of evil." But observe this to the letter, and there will be no honest doubt with regard to our real position. We shall then, in all ordinary cases, have full credit for all the honesty and integrity of purpose to which we are entitled. We shall "let our light shine before men, that others, beholding our good works, may glorify our Father which is in heaven." We shall honor our profession before the world, and in the great day of judgment God will honor us in the presence of the holy angels. AMEN.

SERMON XXXII.

The Opportunity of doing Good unto all Men.

BY REV. BISHOP EDMUND S. JANES.

"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men."—
Galatians vi, 10.

THE subject presented in this passage of Scripture is that of doing good unto others. The proper objects of our kind and Christian offices are declared to be "all men;" and the rule laid down for the government of our benevolent action is the measure of our "opportunity." Each of these branches of the text would afford a delightful topic of remark. The theme of doing good, of philanthropic and Christian enterprise, is one of thrilling interest.

To describe the luxury of this employment would be to relate the experience of angels, and express the highest pleasure which man has ever felt. No intelligent and holy being, either in heaven or on earth, ever has known, or can know, any higher and purer enjoyments, than those which arise from benevolent exertions, properly directed and successfully prosecuted. It might also be very pleasing and profitable for us to consider the claims which "all men" have upon our charities and good offices; and also the especial obligations we are under to do good "unto them who are of the household of faith." But the design of the present discourse is a specific one; namely, to show that the sabbath school furnishes such an "opportunity" as the text describes, and therefore has solemn and sacred claims upon the sympathies, services, and prayers, of all Christian persons.

Having this object in view in the consideration of our text, we shall not enter into a protracted and systematic discussion of the various inviting topics of discourse which it presents, but only notice them so far as they are illustrative of the subject that claims our present attention. In pursuance of this plan of discourse, I observe—

I. SABBATH SCHOOLS AFFORD AN "OPPORTUNITY" TO "DO GOOD."

To estimate and exhibit the good accomplished by these institutions in their direct and indirect bearings, would require a more comprehensive mind and a more graphic pen than I possess. The instruction they have afforded, the religious influence they have exerted, the crimes they have prevented, and the virtue and piety they have induced and cherished, will never be known until the Lion of the tribe of Judah shall prevail to open, in the light of the judgment fires, the books that contain a true and entire record of all the affairs of this world. Then shall be seen, and appreciated by all, the surprisingly great and grand results of their operations. But these institutions are so abundant in the blessings they confer, that some of their good effects are even now obvious.

They prevent much sabbath-breaking.

The awful sin of directly violating the explicit commandment of Almighty God to keep holy the sabbath-day, is alarmingly prevalent at this time in this country. The authority of Heaven, the institutions of religion, and the statutes of the land, are insufficient to restrain multitudes of adult persons from wickedly desecrating the sabbath of God. And while our state and national improvements, our increasing facilities for traveling and transportation, our steamboats, railroads, and canals, are all perverted from their lawful uses to the unholy pleasures or sinful gains of sabbath-breaking, it is truly relieving to the oppressed and grieved feelings of the Christian to reflect, that, through the instrumentality of sabbath schools, hundreds of thousands of children are wholly or partially restrained from this dreadful sin and its attendant evils and dangers. Thus, by preventing juvenile sabbath-breaking, and filling so many youthful minds with a reverence for God's holy sabbaths, much good, much immediate and apparent good, is accomplished. I believe this to have been one of the primary objects of the immortal founder of these institutions. Judging from Mr. Wesley's Journal and other evidences, I believe this to have been one of the very first benefits for which the early friends of sabbath schools labored. But I fear this is not enough thought of or aimed at by many of the teachers and patrons of these schools in modern times.

I cannot conscientiously suffer this opportunity to pass without solemnly protesting against a practice in some places of dismissing their schools, and giving the children liberty either to go into the church or to disperse into the streets: and as most children prefer the liberty to play to the confinement of meeting, the greater part of the school leave under the pretence of going home. But, being without the company of their teachers or parents, they are liable to fall in with bad children, and to be led away into wickedness; or, being without restraint, to indulge the natural disposition of children, and spend the sabbath in play, and thus efface from their minds all recollection of what has been taught them in the school, and commit the very sin from which the school was designed to save them. No teacher does his duty unless he takes all his class with him into the church, and superintends their behavior during divine service, and dismisses his class at the time that their parents can return with them from the house of God. By such a course the children enjoy the instruction of the school, are trained to the worship of the sanctuary, and preserved from all improper conduct on the holy sabbath.

Another benefit of sabbath schools, to be mentioned and valued, is, that

They lead children to the formation of proper and useful associations.

Man is a social being—constituted such by his Creator. Children are especially so. And in forming their early associations they are governed almost entirely by circumstances, rather than by the discretion with which the connections of after life are generally formed. Children are unsuspecting and inconsiderate. They rather fall into, than form, their youthful intimacies. And who does not know that a person's character, happiness, and destinies, are all greatly influenced by his companions and friends? How all-important is it, then, that children should be so circumstanced as to form their early friendships favorably, with persons whose manners, intelligence, and piety, render them examples of character and conduct sufficiently excellent and exalted to be worthy of their imitation! This very desirable point is gained by the sabbath school. Here are the intelligent, pious, and devoted, of our churches—generally the best examples of moral and religious excellence to be found on earth. And in the sabbath school, children, when confiding and imitative, are brought into direct contact with this excellence of character and propriety of manners and deportment. The intimacy between sabbath-school scholars and their teachers is peculiarly endearing. The scholar regards his teacher as his disinterested friend, his best counselor, and sincere well-wisher. He feels that his sabbath-school teacher loves him, and therefore labors and prays for him, that he may do him good. So yielding and susceptible is the character of the scholar, and so powerful the influence of the instructor, that every faithful, praying sabbath-school teacher, may, by the blessing of God, impress the likeness of his own character upon the heart and life of each member of his class. It is in this way that much of the good of sabbath schools is to be effected. We remark, in the third place, that sabbath schools

Develop and improve many minds that would otherwise *remain benighted and depraved, constituting a part of the "magnificent ruins of the fall."*

Soundness of understanding and intelligence of mind are not spontaneous productions. They are the reward of the cultivating hand and the disciplinary power. Indeed, excellence of mind is only found in a cultivated soil, in a religious atmosphere, and under the radiance of the sun of science. And millions of intellectual plants never find this genial soil and atmosphere, until they are transplanted into them by the sabbath school, and these institutions first reflect upon them the vivifying rays of mental light.

Many children, whose parents, perhaps, cannot read, and have not the means of sending them to other schools, and therefore can afford them no other advantages for instruction, are here first learned their alphabet, then its arrangement into syllables, and words, and sentences, until they can read and understand the book of God; and thus is opened to them a world of information and delight. And when enabled to study the Bible, they are capacitated for other reading and studies, and to acquire information on any and all subjects. In the sabbath school they have presented to their thoughts, in different ways, the great and sublime subjects of religious meditation, which so naturally and powerfully expand the mind, and afford full exercise to all the contemplative powers of the soul. And many, who in these institutions first tasted the pleasures of knowledge, so far from having their desire for intellectual improvement satisfied with these early draughts, have thereby had created within them a thirst for information which could not be quenched until they had drunk deep and freely of its unsealed fountains. Consequently, being thus inspired, they have overcome all opposing difficulties, patiently and perseveringly endured the requisite study and toil, until they have stood among the best educated men of their generation, qualified for happiness and usefulness, both in the world and in the church.

The great object of sabbath-school labor, and to which all other considerations ought to be held as subservient, is *The conversion of the children to God—the regeneration of their hearts by the Holy Ghost.*

And though this great and saving blessing does not so uniformly follow the labors of the sabbath school as it might and ought, yet multiplied are the instances where this blessed consequence has crowned the efforts of the faithful servant of God in this department of Christian enterprise. And perhaps there is no human agency so perfectly adapted to this soul-saving work. Indeed, the sabbath school combines all gospel agencies. Here the Scriptures are carefully and accurately read; here the gospel is explained and enforced, and that, too, in the most familiar and affectionate manner, and applied personally to the tender heart and conscience of the scholar; and here, also, all the influences of devotion are exerted; the enlivening and animating power of praise, and the solemn and subduing power of prayer, produce their happiest effects. Here, likewise, is felt the full force of high and holy Christian example, as exhibited in the character and conduct of the teachers. Such a combination of moral and spiritual influences is nowhere else to be found. The sabbath school is the focus which collects all the bright and burning rays of the gospel, and concentrates their genial influences upon the youthful heart. And when this powerful agency is properly and skillfully directed, we may confidently expect the most blessed and extended results. And thus far we have not been disappointed in these expectations. The fruit of the vine has hung in clusters. The continuous triumphs of the cause have generally been graced with the trophies of regenerated youth.

II. IN SABBATH SCHOOLS, MORE FULLY THAN ANYWHERE ELSE, WE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY OF LITERALLY "DOING GOOD UNTO ALL MEN."

These institutions benefit those who labor in them.

Here it is obviously true, that they who water are watered themselves. In order that he may be prepared to instruct his class, the teacher finds it necessary previously to acquaint himself with the subject of his instructions. Thus he is led to study and reflection, and the consequence is the improvement of his own mind. He unites in the devotions of the school, by which his heart is refreshed and made better. Duty requires him to talk to his class about their souls and their Saviour; to set before them their danger and their duty; and urge them to give heed to those "things that belong to their everlasting peace." This exercise cannot fail to quicken and strengthen him in "working out his own salvation." In his fellow-laborers he finds a band of kindred spirits, actuated by the same principles and motives, contending with similar difficulties and discouragements, yet patiently and ardently toiling in the same good work. The society, the sympathy, the examples of these he finds profitable. Thus sabbath-school laborers do good unto *themselves* and *to each other.*

Sabbath schools furnish an opportunity of doing good to the children.

As we have already dwelt upon the benefits conferred by these institutions upon children, we shall not repeat what has been said, or enlarge upon the topic in this place, but merely refer to it to illustrate our present position.

They afford an opportunity of doing good to the parents of the children.

When children are sought out and brought to the sabbath school, sometimes curiosity, and sometimes a love for their children, induce their parents to accompany them to the school, and from thence to the church, and thus indirectly through the sabbath school they are brought to hear, and often savingly to feel, the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The same considerations frequently lead them to read the most excellent library books brought home by their children from the sabbath school, by which they are instructed in the things of God, and induced to seek the salvation of their souls. Again, teachers, in visiting their scholars, have afforded them a favorable opportunity of conversing with the parents on the momentous subjects of religion. The fact of their being the sabbath-school teachers of their children will command for their persons, and for their instructions and admonitions, a respect and attention which afford a strong ground of expectation that their labors will not be "in vain in the Lord." And numerous indeed are the instances where the conversion of the children in the sabbath school has led to the conversion of the parents.

They afford an opportunity of doing good to the community.

All the wickedness and unlawful and riotous conduct existing in society, arise either from the ignorance or depravity of the persons guilty of them. If, then, by sabbath and other schools we instruct and educate all the rising generation, we wholly remove one of the prolific sources of public insecurity and calamity. And if, by the agency of these institutions, we bring the youthful population under moral and religious influences, and not only make them enlightened, but pious, when they come forward in life, we shall then have dried up entirely the sources of public immoralities, disturbances, and tumults; and, having removed the cause, the effect must cease. And to whatever extent we can accomplish these purposes, in exactly the same proportion do we establish public morals and the general weal. I will here take occasion to observe that knowledge and religion are the only conservative powers upon which society can safely depend for quiet and happiness. Peace can look nowhere else for a mandate directed to the stormy passions of depraved men, saying, "Be still!" which command shall hush them in undisturbed tranquillity. And liberty, abused and endangered liberty, can turn her beseeching eye to no other power adequate to give stability to her empire and enlargement to her dominions. It was in view of these facts, that, after the French Revolution had spent most of its terrific violence in blasphemy, anarchy, and bloodshed, the politic but irreligious Napoleon, having seized the helm of the government, declared, "We must restore the sanctions of religion." The same political sagacity, combined with genuine patriotism, induced the sage Franklin, when Paine's "Age of Reason" was submitted to him in manuscript, to say to the infidel author, "*I would advise you not to attempt* UNCHAINING THE TIGER, *but to burn this piece before it is seen by any other person. If men are so wicked* WITH *religion, what would they be* WITHOUT *it?*" However novel and startling the declaration may be to some, and however unwilling others may be to admit the truth, I nevertheless affirm the fact, that the unpretending, and too often unnoticed, but devoted, holy, and praying body of sabbath-school laborers of the present day, are doing more for the promotion of public virtue, and the establishment and perpetuity of free institutions, than all the legislation and political arrangements of the world. They are the "standing army" of freedom. They are the Spartan band that have placed themselves in the Thermopylæ of the moral world, and hold in check, until the gospel shall subdue them, the more than Xerxean host of the vicious.

They afford an opportunity of doing good to the church of Christ.

It must be obvious to all who give the subject their careful attention, that, to a considerable extent, the ranks of the ministry of reconciliation, and the ranks of the "sacramental host" of the church militant, are replenished and multiplied by their operations. These institutions have sometimes also, as with the rod of Moses, smitten a rock from which has gushed forth a stream of life for the salvation of a perishing nation. This was done in the instance of Dr. Morrison, missionary to China, who translated the Bible into the Chinese language, and thus unsealed to her three hundred millions of benighted souls the fountain of saving mercy. Dr. Morrison received his first religious instructions and impressions in the sabbath school. How many more such instances of infinite good to heathen nations have resulted from these seminaries of piety and wisdom, we are unable to say. We are, however, far from believing this to be a solitary case. But this, of itself, is sufficient to hallow our regard for sabbath schools, and to convince those who are laborers in them of their high responsibilities; and also to enlarge their expectations of usefulness, by showing them that one or more of their little pupils may hereafter, by their cultivation, and the blessing of God, stand as a Dr. Morrison or a Harriet Newell on the missionary catalogue. Yes, it is to the immortal youth now under training in our sabbath schools, that the church looks for her intrepid and devout servants, who are to go to the dark places of the earth, which "are full of the habitations of cruelty," and rend from them the veil of heathenism, and reveal unto them the "Sun of righteousness with healing in his wings"—for her bold and dauntless spirits, who, as reformers, are to stem corruption's torrents and defy her thunders—for the vast multitude of her future ministers, who are to stand upon the bank of that "river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God," and cry to a perishing world, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters," and "whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Yes, the sabbath school is the *workshop* where not only the "*living stones*," but also the "*pillars*" and the "*ornaments*," of the church are to be *wrought out and polished.* And these institutions, by furnishing these supplies of missionaries, reformers, and ministers, will render the church the most essential and lasting service.

They afford an opportunity of benefiting the world.

We have already shown this in illustrating their public utility, and their great advantages to the church. They also improve and render healthful the moral atmosphere of this sinful and corrupt world. As a well-watered garden in the midst of a surrounding desert impregnates, with its freshness and perfume, every breeze that sweeps over it, and thus renders healthy and odorous the surrounding and distant atmosphere, so these gardens of the church, in which are found the "balm of Gilead," the "rose of Sharon," and the "lily of the valley," not only send up their fragrance to heaven, but also send abroad their balmy and fragrant influences over the moral wastes of sin around them. They are trees "whose leaves are for the healing of the *nations*." They are perennial flowers that blossom to regale the moral senses of *mankind.* Their influence, like the breath of morning, is, or shall be, felt *in every part of the earth.*

III. HAVING THUS CONSIDERED THIS OPPORTUNITY OF DOING GOOD UNTO ALL MEN, LET US NOW GIVE OUR ATTENTION TO THE BEST MANNER OF IMPROVING IT.

Under ordinary circumstances, I should feel that it became me to speak on this topic with much modesty and diffidence; but, as I have had some experience in teaching, and extensive opportunities of observing the different modes of conducting these schools, and their corresponding results, I shall express my views fully and freely.

There are three things which I consider indispensable in usefully conducting sabbath schools:—

1. *The judicious but strict government of the school.*

The government of the school does not, as is often supposed, belong exclusively to the *superintendent*, but each *teacher* has a responsibility in this matter. The government of the sabbath school may be aptly compared to the federal government of this republic. The teachers represent the state governments, and the superintendent the national government. And in properly filling these respective departments of authority in the school, two things are necessary. *First.* The *self-government* of the *superintendent* and *teachers.* They ought, *neither* of them, to take any liberties they would not be willing to have all their scholars imitate. It is impossible to prevent the scholars from whispering to each other, if the teachers allow themselves the liberty of saluting each other *in the school*, with a "good morning," &c.; and it is useless to think of keeping the children quiet and in their places, if the teachers, after having gone through with their lessons, leave their classes, and go and sit and converse with each other; neither can the scholars be impressed with the necessity of avoiding all noise and disorder, while they see and hear their superintendent and teacher walking about the room with a careless, heavy tread; and it is too unreasonable to require punctuality in the children, when the teacher is often half an hour too late. Before the officers of the school expect their children to keep from whispering and talking in school, let them learn to avoid it themselves: and before they require their scholars to keep in their proper places, let them see to it that they themselves are never out of *their* places: and before they demand of pupils silence and carefulness, let their own tiptoe step and silent movements convince the children of the great propriety and importance of such demeanor: and before they calculate on punctuality from their youth, let them set a proper example on the subject. Again: In governing the school, *we must depend rather upon preventing than punishing improper conduct.* In order to this, every teacher must have a constant supervision of each scholar. It is not necessary, when hearing one of his class read or recite, to give his undivided attention to that exercise; a little practice will enable him at the same time to have an eye upon the whole class, and observe their positions and actions. And in time of singing and prayer, after habituating himself to the practice a little, he will find it no hinderance to his own devotions at the same time to put himself in a position to oversee his class. And this watchfulness on the part of the teachers, both in the school and in the church, will effectually prevent all noise and improprieties.

2. *The correct instruction of the children.*

Whatever is taught, let it be accurately taught. When engaged in teaching them to read, teach them to speak distinctly, to pronounce correctly, and to pay a due attention to punctuation and accent. In giving attention to their recitations, require them to commit their lessons fully. It is doing the children a positive injury to encourage them to hurry over, in a careless manner, their reading lessons, or to come to school with their recitations only half committed. This is especially the case when studying the Holy Scriptures. My feelings have been shocked by the manner in which I have heard sabbath-school children stammering over, and incorrectly and irreverently pretending to recite, their task from the Bible; and still more have they been shocked by hearing their teachers credit them so many verses committed to memory, when, in fact, they knew not a single verse. The children can never obtain a *correct* understanding of the Scriptures from this *incorrect* study of them. And in after life they can never quote them, either in their serious meditations or in conversation. But let them commit perfectly, if it be but one single passage of the word of God, and you have engraven on their minds a truth, which, like a sunbeam of heaven, will ever shine resplendent with light and lustre, unobscured by the darkness of earth or hell. Again: Let everything be carefully *explained.* Let it be so simplified and illustrated, that the limited capacities of the children can readily comprehend it. The instructor is inexcusable if he does not observe whether his scholars *know* their lessons, before he suffers them to pass them by. And in the sabbath school, if nowhere else, it is true, that "what is worth doing at all, is worth doing well."

3. *Giving the school a direct and powerful religious influence.*

The religous character and benefits of the school depend much upon the manner of conducting its devotional exercises. They should be reverent and solemn. The children should all be encouraged to join in the singing. The person leading in prayer should use such plain and familiar language, that even the children will understand him. He should use, as near as may be, the language which children use in asking favors of their parents; and pray, as he would suppose an intelligent and pious child to pray. This will engage their attention, and be likely to interest their feelings, and "teach them how to pray." The religious character of the school will also depend much upon the fidelity of the teachers, in admonishing and exhorting their scholars. The teachers should, *every sabbath*, impress the subject of religion upon the minds of their children. If the recording angel, with "the book of remembrance," was visibly present, taking an exact account of all the transactions of the school, how few teachers would be willing that that account should be sealed up for the judgment, and that angel return to God, without having recorded one attempt, one effort, to induce his class to give their hearts to the Saviour! And yet I fear that many such instances of criminal neglect will stare sabbath-school laborers in the face in that day when "the books shall be opened." But the reward of the teachers, the salvation of the scholars, the usefulness of the school, and the glory of God, all forbid that it should be so. Furthermore, the religious benefits of the school will be proportionate to the *prayer* and *faith* of those who conduct it. The sabbath-school teacher would have very little confidence in the success of a minister, who, though he might preach with the ability of a seraph on the sabbath, should nevertheless forget his people, and neglect to pray for them during the week. And, I would ask, is not the sabbath-school teacher engaged in a similar service—and is he not dependent upon the same divine blessing for his success? How, then, can he expect to accomplish the spiritual designs of his holy calling without daily, fervent prayer to Almighty God for his blessing upon his exertions and his class? It is true here, as in every other department of Christian effort, that "according to our faith it shall be done unto us."

From the foregoing subject we infer—

1. *The importance of sabbath schools.*

If the view we have taken of them be correct, then they stand among the most prominent and useful institutions of the church. They constitute one of the wheels of the gospel chariot. They form a fulcrum upon which the church can place one of her levers in lifting up the world to God. They therefore legitimately claim the favor and patronage of the church, and should receive the attention and fostering care of all her ministers and members. And if we have rightly estimated their bearings upon communities and the world, they are justly entitled to the high regards and cordial support of the patriot and philanthropist, as among the most powerful and promising means for the support of liberty, and the melioration of the condition of our fallen race.

2. *We infer the interesting character of sabbath-school laborers.*

They are second only to the "legate of the skies" in the dignity of their station, and the usefulness of their labors. They are working in the *mint* of heaven, with the gospel of Jesus Christ impressing the divine image on thousands of youthful, but immortal souls. They do not, with the philosophy of Franklin, play with the thunderbolts of heaven; but by prayer they bring down to earth the omnipotent energies of the Holy Ghost, and in their labors employ them for the renovation of degenerate souls. They are *primary planets* in the moral universe of God, attracting to them, and bearing with them, their scholars as their satellites, and thus bringing them within the radiance and under the "healing wings" of the "Sun of righteousness." They are building up the church, blessing the world, and peopling heaven.

3. *We infer the duty of Christians to engage in sabbath-school labors.*

Our text is sufficient to prove this. The apostle says, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men." The sabbath school furnishes us this opportunity; and, regarding the language of the text as no more than that of exhortation, I would ask, Are we at liberty to trifle with it? Is it not the word of God? And is it not as heinous a sin to *neglect* a gospel opportunity of *doing* the will of God, as to *violate* a Scripture command? I confess I know not how multitudes are to "stand in the judgment" of "the last day." The Scriptures, by which they are to be judged, require them, "*as they have opportunity,*" to "*do good unto all men.*" These institutions present them *with this opportunity;* the minister is, from week to week, calling for *laborers* in these nurseries of the church; multitudes of degraded, untutored children, are in their neighborhoods, growing up in sin for the want of some warm Christian heart to pity their situation, and make an effort to relieve them. And yet heaven and earth cannot move these persons, who have *named the name of Christ*, to give up their *inglorious ease* on *God's own day*, and devote its sacred hours to pious exertions in the cause of Christ and humanity. "May God have mercy on their souls!" The church has made a grievous mistake on this subject, by supposing that the duties and interests of these institutions were to be committed, exclusively, to the young and inexperienced. This is both impolitic and improper. What political government would place its military academies under the direction and management of men who had themselves but just enlisted, and had had but little or no opportunity to make themselves acquainted with the science of arms? And shall the church, in marshaling her forces for the conquest of a rebellious world and the acquisition of heaven, commit her institutions for religious training exclusively to those who are young in years, and but just enlisted in the "holy war?" Common sense and sound judgment forbid it. We need in the sabbath school "the old soldiers of the cross," that we may have the wisdom of their experience and the weight of their example. We also need the young, that we may have the advantage of their activity and their zeal. And neither the old nor the young, neither the rich nor the poor, neither the married nor the unmarried, can be excused, unless they are *positively incapacitated* by ill health, or other uncontrollable circumtsances.

4. *We infer the reward of sabbath-school labors.*

Some persons seem to feel, and indeed say, that there is a "drudgery in these labors." I cannot think so. If there be a "drudgery" connected with them, it is precisely the same as that in which the Lord Jesus Christ was engaged, during the whole of the active part of his incarnate life; namely, the "drudgery" of instructing the ignorant, reforming the depraved, and assisting the helpless. This is a "drudgery" which the highest archangel in heaven would *covet*, and which true religion *seeks*. I admit that there are sacrifices and toil connected with the services of these institutions, and there are "noise and dust" in the battle they wage with ignorance and sin. But *victory* can only be enjoyed after a *conflict.* The rainbow is always seen in connection with the dark and watery cloud, and *reward* must always follow *sacrifice and labor.* Attendant on faithful sabbath-school labors there is a great and glorious reward. Pious actions, like spiritual attainments, bless *now* and *for ever.* The soul, *unemployed* and *unexcited,* becomes like the stagnant pool, poisonous to itself, and pestilential in its influences; while the soul piously *employed* and spiritually *excited* is like the gushing spring of the mountain side, always pure and fresh, and ever sending forth its limpid stream to give fertility and beauty to the vale through which it passes. How striking the contrast between the *professing Christian* who slumbers unusually late on sabbath morning; benumbs his senses by excessive sleep—consequently is unfit for his morning devotions; is so late at breakfast, and so slow at dressing, that he gets to church after service is begun; feels dull and sleepy during the exercises; goes home and dines heartily, and then must take a nap, or, perhaps, with the multitude of *other sabbath-breakers,* he takes a walk; peradventure gets to meeting again in the evening, and thus spends his entire sabbath without profit or pleasure, neither blessing nor being blessed;—and that *professor of religion* who hails with delight "the ushering in" of the holy sabbath; spends its earliest hours in devotion; filled with heavenly peace and sacred joy, hies away in good season to the sabbath school; meets with pleasure the little ones for whom he has been praying, and has now come to labor; goes through, with sweetness and affection, all the duties of the school; then with his little friends enters the church, prepared to engage with fervor and delight in the services of the sanctuary; and in the afternoon repeats the same delightful Christian exercises; thus "keeps the sabbath holy unto the Lord," worships "in the spirit," does good unto others, and has the approbation of his conscience and his God. O! ye *slothful ones,* who prefer your *ease* to your *duty,* tell me, are not faithful sabbath-school laborers rewarded a hundred fold in this life? But it is not in *this life* that they are to look for or enjoy their highest reward; but in the life to come, being *numbered* with those that "have turned many to righteousness," they "shall shine as the stars for ever and ever."

SERMON XXXIII.

Christ's first Sermon after his Resurrection; or, Christ the Theme of the Prophets.

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"And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."—Luke xxiv, 27.

On the day of our Lord's resurrection, two of the disciples (not of the twelve) were traveling from Jerusalem to a village called Emmaus, which lay north-west of Jerusalem about eight miles; and as they traveled they talked together of all those things which had happened; that is, of the crucifixion and the resurrection of Christ. "And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering, said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people; and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and besides all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done. Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" Then come in the words of the text: "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."

I. LET US FIRST CONSIDER OUR LORD'S SERMON ON THIS OCCASION.

He explains Moses, the prophets, and the Scriptures in general, concerning himself. He probably began with Genesis iii, 15: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Then he proceeded to Gen. xiv, 18, and took up the character of Melchizedek, priest of the Most High God, king of Salem, king of righteousness, and king of peace, and showed how that eminent priest and king was a type of the great Messiah. Then he probably explained the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Gen. xxii, 18: "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," showing that the Messiah had come to bestow benefits, in some degree, on all mankind. Then he took up the words of Jacob, Gen. xlix, 10: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." And, *at large*, he showed them how this prophecy was fulfilled in the timely manifestation of Jesus in the flesh. Next he expounded Deut. xviii, 15: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me." Here the Saviour showed them how Christ, in his mission, in many of the circumstances of his life, resembled Moses, and fulfilled that great promise to Israel. Then he proceeded to the types, sacrifices, and ceremonies of the law, showing how they were all intended to prefigure the Messiah, and how they were accomplished in his ministry, sufferings, and death. He then illustrated the great deliverance to the Israelites, who had been poisoned by the fiery serpents, as he had done before, in his discourse to Nicodemus, John iii, 14: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." Here he showed how full, how free, and on what easy condition, salvation was provided for sinful man, when Christ was lifted up on the cross, and by his being further exhibited to the world by the preaching of the cross. We may suppose he next quoted Isaiah vii, 14: "Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." A miracle was here predicted, altogether above the power of nature, and beyond the foresight of man; yet the divine Teacher shows that it was perfectly accomplished in the person of Jesus. Again, he refers to Isaiah ix, 6: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace." O, if we could have heard that sermon, or if it had been left on record, what an illustration we should have seen of that essential gospel doctrine, that the mighty God was united in one person with feeble manhood for the redemption of the world! Now he showed them that the time of Christ's personal appearance in the world had been the subject of prophecy, Daniel ix, 24–26: "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy," &c. Here the heavenly preacher, probably, informed his hearers when Daniel's term of seventy weeks commenced, and how the great events of that prophecy had been and would be accomplished. Probably he next quoted Malachi iii, 1: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple." He took occasion to show them that the ministry of the Baptist and the preaching of Christ in the temple had fulfilled the predictions of the prophet. Let us suppose that then the holy minister showed them that in the person of Jesus the prophecies were fulfilled which declared that the Messiah should descend from Judah, and from Jesse, and from David, Isaiah xi, 1, 10: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.... And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people: to it shall the Gentiles seek; and his rest shall be glorious." The prophecy of Micah, respecting the place of the Messiah's birth, then came under consideration, chap. v, 2: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." What a prophecy was this, that the Being, whose goings forth were from everlasting, would manifest himself in Israel as their ruler; and, humbling himself, would take upon him the form of a man, and be born of a virgin in Bethlehem! Singular as it might appear, this great personage, who was to be born in Bethlehem, should be called out of Egypt, Hosea xi, 1: "And called my son out of Egypt." Here, probably, the Messiah showed how this prophecy not only referred to Israel formerly, but to a particular fact in the history of Jesus. So, too, the Holy Spirit, a sure commentator, taught St. Matthew (chap. ii, 15) to understand it. The Saviour then went on to show them that the great persecution that had been raised against Christ, and that had fallen upon the innocent children of Bethlehem, had been predicted, Jer. xxxi, 15: "A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children, refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not." Matt. ii, 18. He taught the disciples further how the Messiah's residence at Nazareth had been foretold by the Scriptures, and what Matthew meant, chap. ii, 23: "And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene." Authors differ very much in opinion on this text. The following, from Mr. Wesley's Notes on the passage, I think is the best I have seen: "He came and dwelt in Nazareth, (where he had dwelt before he went to Bethlehem,) a place contemptible to a proverb, so that thereby has been fulfilled what has been spoken, in effect, by several of the prophets, (though by none of them in express words,) He shall be called a Nazarene, that is, he shall be despised and rejected; shall be a mark of public contempt and reproach." Watson on this passage confirms the same opinion, as appears from the following: "No such passage occurs in the old Testament, nor can St. Matthew refer to any particular text, because he does not refer to any particular prophet; for the phrase is, 'That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the PROPHETS;' in the plural, so that something was thus accomplished in Christ, to which all the prophets gave concurrent testimony. Now it is plain that they all agree that he should be despised as well as rejected of men; that he should be the object of contumely and reproach; and therefore, as Whitby well remarks, 'the angel sent him to this contemptible place that he might have a name of infamy put upon him.' He shall be called mean and contemptible, as the root of the word signifies, as well as separated. How Nazareth was esteemed, we learn from the words of the mild Nathaniel: 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' and the title Nazarene has been, by Jews and other enemies, always given in contempt to our Saviour and his disciples. All the other speculations of commentators on the designation appear to be fanciful and groundless."

He next illustrated Isaiah ix, 1, 2, as quoted by Matthew, (iv, 15, 16,) to show them how the Messiah's residence, preaching, and miracles, in Capernaum by the way of the sea, were foretold by the prophet: "The land of Zebulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up." He showed them, further, that even the manner of his riding into Jerusalem had been predicted by Zechariah, ix, 9: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." Matt. xxi, 5. Even the contemptible price for which the Redeemer was sold, Jesus showed them from the same prophet Zechariah, xi, 12: "So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver." Matt. xxvi, 15. The treachery of Judas toward the divine Master, as pointed out by the Psalmist, was next referred to, Psalm xli, 9: "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." John xiii, 18. This wonderful teacher further informed them, that the circumstance of Christ's disciples fleeing and leaving him, in the hour of his trial, had been marked by prophecy, Zechariah xiii, 7: "Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." Matt. xxvi, 31. We may suppose that, in prosecuting his discourse, the Saviour passed on to some of the prophecies which pointed out the peculiar circumstances of the Messiah's sufferings, of which sufferings the disciples had been eye-witnesses, Isaiah l, 6: "I hid not my face from shame and spitting." Matt. xxvi, 67. Isaiah l, 6: "I gave my back to the smiters." Matt. xxvii, 26. Psalm lxix, 21: "They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." Matt. xxvii, 34. Psalm xxii, 18: "They parted my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." Matt. xxvii, 35. Psalm xxii, 16: "They pierced my hands and my feet." Zechariah xiii, 6: "What are these wounds in thy hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends." These were predictions of his crucifixion, as is recorded in Matt. xxvii, 35. Isaiah liii, 12: "He was numbered with the transgressors;" that is, he was crucified between two thieves, as Matthew informs us, ch. xxvii, 28. Psalm xxii, 8: "He trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him." This prophecy refers to the insolence of our Saviour's enemies, recorded in Matt. xxvii, 43. Psalm xxii, 1: "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" Matt. xxvii, 46. Zechariah xii, 10: "And they shall look on him whom they have pierced." This was a prophecy of the soldier's piercing his side. John xix, 34. Psalm xxxi, 5: "Into thy hand I commit my spirit." This was a prophecy of the words the Saviour used in his death, as is declared by St. Luke, xxiii, 46. What an assemblage was here, of singular and unexpected events! What mind could have foreseen these things but the divine Mind? What evidence is here furnished, that holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost! What a deep interest must the hearers have felt, while they listened to the Master in his explanations of these prophecies, and when he proved to them, beyond all possible doubt, that they had their accomplishment in Christ's sufferings! Now they heard, and possibly for the first time, a clear exposition of the doctrines of the great atonement; and, it may be, this was the time when they were brought to an experimental knowledge of the great salvation procured by that atonement. How suitable, then, was their ecstasy, and how appropriate their exclamation, when they said, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?"

Probably the Saviour then proceeded to show them how the prophecy in Psalm xxxiv, 20, "A bone of him shall not be broken," was fulfilled. John xix, 36. He went on also to show them how the burial of Jesus in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea had been marked by the prophet Isaiah, liii, 9: "He made his grave... with the rich in his death." Matt. xxvii, 60. Even the use that was made of the thirty pieces of silver, for which Jesus was sold, he showed them was a subject of prophecy, Zechariah xi, 13: "And I took the thirty pieces of silver and cast them to the potter." Matt. xxvii, 10. These disciples had just informed the supposed stranger in Jerusalem, that certain women of their company had reported that Christ was missing from the sepulchre, and that a vision of angels had declared to them that he was alive. The teacher then showed them that this glorious event had been foreseen and foretold by the Psalmist, Psalm xvi, 10: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption." Here he taught them, that though the soul of Jesus had been in the place of departed spirits, which this scripture calls hell, (not the place of torment,) and that though his body had been in the tomb, yet he had not lain there long enough to see corruption, and that now the report they had heard of his being alive was true, for the Lord is risen indeed. He showed them, further, that this glorious personage, who is reported to have risen from the dead, would shortly ascend up into heaven, whence he came, Psalm lxviii, 18: "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." He received gifts for men—the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which Jesus had promised before his crucifixion, and all the blessings accompanying the dispensation of the Spirit.

It is likely that the Lord proceeded to enlarge on the doctrines the Messiah should teach, as they are portrayed by the prophets. He spake of the great salvation. "He is just, and having salvation;" salvation from the guilt, dominion, love, and indwelling of sin; salvation from the wrath of God which hangs over sinners; salvation from the malice and cruelty of Satan; salvation for the soul, and, at the resurrection, salvation for the body; salvation for all dying infants, so that no one of them goes to hell, either for Adam's sin or for their own depravity, they being purchased by the atoning blood, and, if they are taken out of the world in infancy, they, being sanctified by the eternal Spirit, are taken into the kingdom of heaven, according to the word of Him who said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." It is a salvation offered to all, and will be a sure salvation to all penitent believers; a free salvation, without money or price, without worthiness or obedience, as a condition of it; a salvation for the chief of sinners, the lowest and the meanest not excepted; a full salvation from everything that would cast a man out of the divine favor, or hinder his admittance into the kingdom of glory; a present salvation, offered to every one now that will believe; an eternal salvation, from all the effects and consequences both of original and actual sin.

He gave them next a description of the spiritual kingdom of Jesus, and showed them how the words of Isaiah would be fulfilled, when he said of the Messiah, "His name shall be called, The Prince of peace." Here I should not wonder if he extended his remarks to what has been called the latter-day glory—the Millennium—a day that will certainly bless the church before the resurrection of the dead and the end of the world. He expounded Zechariah ix, 10: "He shall speak peace to the heathen. ... And his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth," showing them how the dark places of the earth should be enlightened; how the heathen shall cast their idols to the moles and to the bats; how the Gentiles shall come to his light, and kings to the brightness of his rising. He went on to show them how, in the latter day, the Jews also would submit to the authority of the Messiah, and referred to Ezekiel xxxvii, 21–24: "Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all; and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all; neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions; but I will save them out of all their dwelling-places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them; so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. And David my servant" (Messiah) "shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them." What a field was here open for the illustrious expounder of the prophets to exhibit to his astonished hearers the future glories of the Messiah's kingdom; showing how the promises to David and to Solomon would be accomplished in the success and influence of the gospel among Jews as well as Gentiles! He referred, probably, to Isaiah ii, 4: "And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." No wonder the hearts of the disciples burned within them while they heard this part of the discourse, and were led to understand how Jesus, the Messiah, should judge among the nations, and rebuke many people, by preaching both his law and his gospel, until he should subdue the turbulent passions of men, destroy their personal animosities, their family and neighborhood contentions, and put an end to their national conflicts, and bring them to one general feeling of brotherhood; subduing princes and senates, and the great body of the tribes of men, to the mild sceptre of the Prince of peace, till they should no longer shed each other's blood, nor learn war any more.

II. LET US CONSIDER THE BENEFITS WE MAY DERIVE FROM THIS SERMON.

1. *It encourages us to search and understand the Scriptures.*

The Scriptures furnish our only certain rule of morals. They teach us the duties growing out of our domestic relations—the duties we owe to wives, husbands, parents, children, brothers, and sisters, of which we should be ignorant were it not for this blessed Bible. The Scriptures show how we ought to conduct toward our fellow-men in general, in all the relations and circumstances of life. They teach us the existence and character of God as our Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer, and furnish us with all necessary information respecting our duty to him—subjects of the highest and most important knowledge for every soul of man. The Scriptures lead us to a true knowledge of ourselves—of our origin, our spiritual and immortal nature. Without revelation, we should have no satisfactory information respecting our future being; we should not know whether we are to exist at all after death; or, if to exist, whether we are all to be happy, or all miserable; nor whether there is any way for us to escape misery and to obtain happiness. But by the Scriptures life and immortality are brought to light; the way to heaven is laid open, and divine light is furnished for every step of our pilgrimage to eternal glory. As our Lord Jesus Christ is revealed in the Scriptures as the way, the truth, and the life, we should search these holy records for the true knowledge of Christ—his nature, his character, his atonement, his doctrines and precepts. Especially should those who teach his religion search the Scriptures, and gain an accurate knowledge of Christ in all his offices. Above all, *they* should not be in darkness respecting the true Messiah, and the way to heaven by him. If they teach the people to trust in some other Saviour, rather than in the Word who was made flesh, and dwelt among us; if *they* teach that that God who was manifested in the flesh is not an object of trust and worship; or, if they point the people to some other foundation of salvation and hope than the atonement made by Christ on the cross, and thus put darkness for light, they will be guilty of preaching a false Saviour, and of leading the people into a false religion; and thus, the blind leading the blind, both will fall into the ditch together.

2. *It encourages us to preach Scripture sermons.*

The Scriptures must be the foundation and the life of our religious discourses. Preaching the Scriptures is to make the people wise unto salvation. The word of God is the sword of the Spirit, by which the messenger of Christ is to penetrate the hearts of rebels against God, and bring them wounded and humbled to the foot of the cross, to obtain mercy and grace, through the blood of the Lamb, to heal, and cleanse, and pardon, their guilty souls. Let him not suppose his business is to compose a polished sermon, drawn from the opinions and the philosophy of men, conveyed in finely rounded periods, embellished style, the words of wisdom which man's wisdom teacheth, to get for himself admiration and praise from those that hear him. By such means he may get his reward—the honor that cometh of men—but he will fail of that honor which cometh from God, and he will fall far short of imitating the example of that Teacher from heaven, whose sermon is the subject of our contemplation. Neither will the hearts of his hearers burn within them, while he fails to open to them the Scriptures, but gratifies their "itching ears" with words and sayings which are unbecoming the sanctity of his holy office, calculated to feed the people with husks and ashes rather than with the sincere milk of the word. Behold what an example is set to preachers of the gospel by our heavenly Master in the discourse we have had under consideration! See that example followed by St. Peter, in his sermon recorded in the second chapter of the Acts; and by St. Stephen in the seventh chapter, and by St. Paul in the thirteenth chapter—examples that ought ever to be before the eye of every minister of Christ, the models for his imitation.

3. *It calls the people to listen to Scripture sermons.*

They come to the house of God to be instructed respecting God and religion, their duty to God and man, the great interests of their souls, how they may be saved from sin and hell, and gain an inheritance in the kingdom of heaven. Let them, then, respect those sermons which draw their doctrines and illustrations from the Holy Scriptures; let them give the more earnest heed to the things they have heard, lest at any time they should let them slip. God gives them the sabbath, the sanctuary, and the ministry, for the great purposes of their salvation; let them not undervalue these sacred institutions; let them improve the things which belong to their peace, lest they be hid from their eyes. It is a desecration of these holy institutions for the people to look to the pulpit for fables; or for the wisdom that cometh of men; or for such preaching as is calculated to delight the imaginations and taste of a sinful people; or to be pleased with those performances in which men preach themselves instead of Christ Jesus the Lord. It has become too common a thing of this age, for the people to cry, "Prophesy unto us *smooth* *things;*" following the examples of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, they speak lightly of God's plain, faithful, Scriptural ministers, and thereby bring dearth and a curse on their own souls, and on the souls of the people associated with them.

4. *This sermon should move the preachers of the gospel to imitate their blessed Master in preaching Christ, as suitable opportunities are presented, even to small congregations.* They are to be instant in season, out of season; to reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine. They are to watch for the right time and place, while walking, or riding, or sailing, or in the domestic or social circle, *to reason with the people out of the Scriptures,* "opening and alledging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ." The spirit of Christ in his primitive ministers led them to follow his example; as Philip to the eunuch, Acts viii, 35: "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus;" or like Paul to the philosophers of Athens, preaching unto them Jesus and the resurrection. As far as the same spirit now animates the preachers of the gospel, as they feel the worth of souls for whom Christ died, as they see the importance of their salvation, they improve every fit opportunity to preach Christ to them. Preachers of this character will not be satisfied with barely preaching to the great congregation on the sabbath; but, as far as other duties will allow, and health and strength will permit, and to the extent the condition of the people requires it, they will go out into remote neighborhoods on week days, where many of the people cannot attend the sabbath service, and preach unto them Christ and his salvation. They never will object, "The people will not pay us," nor say, "They might come to the church on the sabbath;" but, feeling that a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto them, and that there is a wo unto them if they preach not the gospel, the holy fire of love to God, and to the souls he hath made, will thrust them out, to go, like their divine Master, and seek for the lost sheep and bring them to Christ.

5. *This sermon strengthens our faith in the truth of the Scriptures.*

Our Lord expounded unto them in all the Scriptures. It furnishes an evidence that all the books of the Old Testament are to be received as the word of God. In the time of our Lord, the Jews received all the books as Holy Scriptures which are now contained in our Old Testament. They did not allow the Apocrypha to be a part of the Scriptures, as it was written at a time when they had no prophets or miracles among them. These apocryphal books never ought to be bound in the same volume with the Scriptures. Some have doubted the divine authority of the Song of Solomon; but this sermon of our Lord settles the question, and gives his sanction to that portion of the Jewish Scriptures as a part of the word of God. That the Song, or Canticles, was a part of the Jewish Scriptures, is testified by Josephus, and approved by Dr. Adam Clarke, as may be seen by his note on the forty-fourth verse of this chapter. John v, 39: "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." 2 Timothy iii, 15, 16: "And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." Acts xvii, 11: "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so." These quotations furnish the highest authority that can be given—by the word of Christ, and by that of the inspired apostles—that all the books of the Old Testament, as received by the Jews in the time of our Saviour, and as now contained in our Bibles, are to be regarded as the word of God.

This sermon strengthens our confidence in our translation of the Scriptures. It shows us that the word of God can be conveyed by a translation; for the Jews generally used the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint. They read it in the synagogues; Christ and the apostles generally quoted from it; it was read in the primitive Christian churches; the fathers quoted from it; all of which go to prove that they regarded that translation as the word of God. And if the Septuagint was the word of God, our version is so also, and the Scriptures may be given by translation to the different nations under heaven. Admit the opinion that the word of God cannot be understood by a translation, and you involve the absurdity that there is no Bible for all nations; and you teach that the people must trust the priests to tell them what is the word of God.

This sermon strengthens our faith in the truth of the prophecies concerning the future advancement and prosperity of Christ's kingdom in this world. Psalm ii, 8: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." To the unbelieving mind, the wide-spread idolatry of the heathen, the extended influence of Mohammedanism, the iron arm of Popery, the infidelity and corruption of multitudes who are called Protestant Christians, the dreadful wickedness of the great body of the people throughout Christendom, the spirit of avarice, cruelty, and war, which broods over the nations, present insurmountable obstacles to the establishment of Christ's kingdom all over the world. But hark! who gave the promise last quoted? "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Did not God promise to Abraham, when the Canaanite dwelt in the land, "Unto thy seed will I give" it? Who brought Israel up out of Egypt, the house of his bondage? Who opened the Red Sea as a path to deliver his people from Pharaoh, with his hosts of horsemen and of chariots? Who went before his chosen, their leader and guard, in a pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night? Who made the waters of Jordan subside at the entrance of the ark of his covenant, and, with a high hand and outstretched arm, brought his people to the land *he had promised?* The same God who promises the heathen for the inheritance of his Son, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. Who promised, Jeremiah xxiii, 5, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth?" Was not that promise, in part, fulfilled in the ministry, death, and resurrection, of Christ? And will it not be fully accomplished in establishing the reign of Christ over all lands? Did not the Prince of peace conquer sin, and hell, and death? Did he not shake the idols at the day of Pentecost, and give his ministry power to bring thousands of the heathen into his kingdom in the days of the apostles? Then, certainly, by such means as he shall appoint, and in his own time,—

"Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Does his successive journeys run:
His kingdom spread from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.

"From north to south the princes meet
To pay their homage at his feet;
While western empires own their Lord,
And savage tribes attend his word."

It strengthens the *faith* of individual Christians in all God has promised for their protection, support, and comfort, through all the trials of life, and in the awful hour of death. The same God, who is the author of the Holy Scriptures, so eminently fulfilled in the person of the Messiah, has made all the exceeding great and precious promises to Christ's disciples:—

"His word of grace is sure and strong
As that which built the skies;
The voice that rolls the stars along,
Speaks all the promises."—WATTS.

6. *This sermon tends to increase our abhorrence of sin.* Why was it necessary for our Saviour to endure the sufferings portrayed by the prophecies which he expounded in this sermon? The answer is in his own words, in the 46th and 47th verses of this chapter: "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Had we not sinned, the Saviour had not suffered; had he not suffered, repentance and remission of sins had not been preached. Except, through his sufferings, the Holy Spirit could not have been given to enlighten our dark minds, or to soften our hard hearts; nor could the gospel have been preached to pro-

claim pardon to our guilty souls. Acts v, 31: "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." Can we think of our Lord, denied, betrayed, forsaken, agonizing in the garden, bleeding and dying on the cross, bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, without hating those sins which were the occasion of his pouring out his soul unto death?

7. *This sermon should increase our love to Christ.*

2 Cor. viii, 9: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." 1 Tim. i, 15: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." If we believe this glorious truth, that Christ died for sinners; if we suitably meditate upon it, our hearts will *burn* within us, not only with joy and hope, but with love to Him who bought us with so great a price. We shall then know what that saying means—"love is stronger than death."

"Thus might I hide my blushing face,
While his dear cross appears;
Dissolve my heart in thankfulness,
And melt mine eyes to tears.

"But drops of grief can ne'er repay
The debt of love I owe;
Here, Lord, I give myself away,
'Tis all that I can do."

8. *This sermon should revive our zeal for Christ's cause, and for the salvation of our fellow-creatures.*

He did and suffered what is illustrated in this sermon; and shall we not do something for him, and for the souls he has redeemed? Luke xxiv, 33–35: "And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen, indeed, and hath appeared to Simon: and they told what things were done in the way; and how he was known to them in breaking of bread." The same spirit that this sermon produced on these disciples, was given to St. Paul—2 Cor. v, 13, 14: "For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." The redeemed soul enters, in his measure, into the spirit which dwelt in Christ, when he gave up his soul unto death. Whenever a door opens for him to do good, his heart is prepared for the work; he feels for the salvation of his family and friends more than for their temporal benefits. The love of Christ will constrain him to pray for them, teach them, and labor to bring them to Christ and to heaven. If the gospel is to be preached to the heathen, he is ready to say, Here am I, send me; or, if he is not called to be a missionary, he is ready to contribute of his substance, as God hath given him ability, to sustain those who are thus called. He is ready to labor, or assist others in their labors, by prayers and pecuniary contributions, to sustain that glorious institution which God's providence hath wonderfully provided to bless the church and to enlighten the world—the sabbath school. In this institution, though sometimes one may be called to labor for a little company of the lambs of Christ's flock, the love of that Master, who took little children in his arms and blessed them, saying, Of such is the kingdom of heaven; and who is represented as gathering the lambs in his arms, and carrying them in his bosom, and who could preach so long a sermon to but two of his disciples, will not only sustain them under their labors, but will move them to count themselves honored in being associated with so kind a Shepherd. If men will meditate on this sermon, while they see that all things are fulfilled, or will be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Jesus, it will fire their hearts with love for the Holy Scriptures, and lead them to pray, and contribute, and otherwise labor, as Providence shall open the door, to aid in spreading the Scriptures throughout the world, until it shall be seen through all nations, that Christ was given for a light to the Gentiles, that he may be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.

"Then will I tell to sinners round,
What a dear Saviour I have found;
I'll point to thy redeeming blood,
And say, 'Behold the way to God.'"

9. *This sermon confirms our hope of heaven.*

The promises will be fulfilled. The author of this sermon had said, John xiv, 1–3: "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you: and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also." The spirit of prophecy which promised the coming of Jesus, promised also, Isaiah xxxv, 10, "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Jesus said, "As I live, ye shall live also:" and, to his faithful friends, that word will never fail.

10. *This sermon affords great encouragement to penitent, believing souls.*

The Spirit of God in the prophets, which so fully and particularly predicted the advent, life, sufferings, and death, of Christ, hath said, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." And, also, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." The Redeemer confirmed that promise, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." His apostles frequently renewed it: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Let no one doubt or fear to come to this Saviour. Let not his sins, or his unworthiness, keep him from the foot of the cross. Let him not wait to make himself better before he comes, for this he can never effect. Let him only consent to forsake his sins, and believe in Jesus, and come now, wounded, bleeding, oppressed with sin's intolerable load, as he is; let him come, and say, from a broken heart, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me; and, as the Lord liveth, he shall find rest to his soul.

11. *This sermon should be a warning to us that the threatenings of the Bible will be fulfilled.*

The voice of eternal truth, which uttered these wonderful predictions concerning Christ, has also said, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, with all the nations that forget God." The Author of this sermon hath said, "He that believeth not shall be damned." An inspired apostle hath said, "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." Surely, as the word of the prophets was true in regard to his first advent, so it will be accomplished in his second advent. Surely, as it was true, and Christ came to be humbled and to suffer, will it be true that he shall come to be honored and to be glorified. Surely, as it was fulfilled, and he came to be judged by men in his first appearing, will it be fulfilled, and he shall come to judge the world at his second appearing. As certainly as he once came to show mercy, and as he now lives to show mercy, he will come in the great day to take "*vengeance*" on his enemies. O, sinner! flee! flee! from the face of the Judge—flee from the wrath to come—flee from the vengeance of that Judge you have so much injured—flee, without any delay—flee, while he, who is yet to be your judge, is on the mercy-seat—fly to the Lamb of God, who yet remains ready and willing to take away the sins of the world.

SERMON XXXIV.

The New Birth.

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"Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."—John iii, 5.

AMONG the many proofs of the divine inspiration which guided the writers of the Holy Scriptures, may be fairly adduced the simplicity and absence of display in the narratives they contain of the greatest events which are anywhere recorded in history. Had Homer, or Virgil, or any historian of antiquity, invented or given the tradition of such an interview and dialogue as that recorded in the third chapter of St. John's Gospel, with what poetical imagery and glowing eloquence it would have been introduced! Yet nothing can exceed in beauty—nothing could add to the interest of the simple unadorned style in which the evangelist records the transaction: "There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus: the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man doeth the miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." And then the direct annunciation of the terms and conditions of man's salvation from the divine Teacher to the sincere, humble believer in his authority, as a teacher sent from God, without circumlocution or any pompous introduction, so different from the manner in which an impostor, or the inventor of a new religion, would have issued his dogmas, affords internal evidence of the truth of the narrative.

And what an important portion of history is here recorded! Whether we consider the condition of the world when it occurred, the subject discussed, or the persons engaged in the conversation, this is certainly among the most deeply interesting incidents recorded in the Bible.

"The world by wisdom knew not God." At the time of this interview between our blessed Lord and Nicodemus, the whole world, with the exception of the little territory of Judea, was "wholly given to idolatry." In vain had men of the brightest intellect cultivated letters and philosophy. So far from being able to *originate* the idea of a true God, they had not been able to preserve the revelation made to the patriarchs before the flood, which gave the knowledge of his nature and attributes. The gods of Greece and Rome were either imaginary creations, or dead men, whom their ancestors had deified for their heroism and prowess; and they supplied them with female companions according to their fancy. Of these imaginary deities they made images of gold, of silver, of wood, or of stone, and worshiped them, offering to them sacrifices and prayers. The absolute necessity of a revealed religion could not have been more certainly demonstrated. The Greeks and the Romans furnish us to this day with the most perfect models in eloquence, in poetry, in architecture, in statuary, and in painting; and our colleges and institutions of learning make the writings of antiquity the chief study of youth. Yet these writers were as ignorant of the true God, of the service and worship due to him, and the right means of propitiating his favor, as the wildest of the barbarous nations around them. And if the Jews were an exception to the general state of the world, it was because they had been separated from the rest of mankind by direct manifestations of the divine power, and preserved by miracle from the common defection. And this, not for their own sakes, or on account of their superior piety or deservings; but that they might be the depositary of revealed truth until the promised Messiah should come, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed. Yet even these had "made void the law of God through their traditions; teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." They drew near to God with their lips, while their hearts were far from him.

In this state of universal apostasy and rebellion against the rightful Sovereign of heaven and earth, "a teacher, come from God," appears in Judea, to communicate to man the true religion—the way to eternal happiness—and at his feet we find a sincere, humble inquirer, come to learn of him the message he bore from heaven to a fallen, guilty world—a rebellious province of God's universal empire. But how wonderful is this! A messenger from heaven! Why, ever since the fall, man has been afraid to hear from heaven. Adam hid himself amidst the trees of the paradise he had forfeited, when, after his fall, "he heard the voice of God in the garden." And when Jehovah spoke on Sinai, the whole congregation of Israel did exceedingly fear and tremble. Even the appearance of one of those "angels who do his pleasure," would fill the heart of the stoutest and most courageous of mortals with affright and dismay, unless supernaturally sustained. When Cornelius saw the angel, sent to him in answer to his prayers, "he looked on him, and was afraid." How is it, then, that Nicodemus betrays no fear when he approaches this "teacher come from God?" Ah! it was because this teacher, who was "in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, made himself of no reputation"—literally "emptied himself" of the glory which he had with the Father, before the world was—"and took on him the form of a servant,"—not of an angelic servant—but made in the likeness of men—"being found in fashion as a man." "The brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person," he appears clothed with humanity; and, thus veiled, greater sinners than Nicodemus have approached him without dread; yea, in humble love and confidence, and "heard words" by which they have been saved. "O matchless grace! O boundless love!"

As the indispensable qualification for entering the kingdom of heaven,—the Messiah's kingdom of grace on earth, preparatory to his kingdom of glory in heaven,—is regeneration, the text I have selected requires I should endeavor to show the nature, the evidences, and the necessity, of the new birth; and

I. ITS NATURE. And here we must premise that, as the new birth is wholly and exclusively a doctrine of the Bible, we can look nowhere else for any explanation of its nature or import. The Bible then divides the world into two classes or states. The one a state of guilt, depravity, and condemnation; the other a state of pardon, sanctification, and deliverance from the sentence of death, which the law of God annexes to the transgression of its precepts. Now, when God, by an act of his grace, brings a man out of the first into the second state, he is said in Scripture language to be "born again." But,

First. This is a great change, but it implies no physical change. The man has the same bodily powers—and no more—after he is born again, that he had before. Neither does it deprive the subject of any natural mental faculty, passion, or appetite. All these are rectified, and sanctified to the glory of God, but they are not destroyed.

Secondly. The work of regeneration is not merely a relative change—such as takes place when a heathen, convinced of the folly of worshiping images, abjures idolatry, and openly professes a belief in the Christian religion, without any change of heart. Relatively this is a great change, but it is not the new birth. Such a one is greatly enlightened, and will be correspondingly improved in his notions of God, and of the worship and service due to him. But, with all this, he may know nothing of the spirituality of religion, nor experience any of its spiritual enjoyments.

Thirdly. Water baptism is not regeneration—does not effect the change of heart and life which the new birth implies. For, first, we cannot affirm of water baptism what the Scriptures affirm of the new birth. St. John says, "He that is born of God doth not commit sin,"—doth not willingly live in the violation of any known divine commandment. But can we say this of all who have been baptized with water? Alas! how many "baptizèd infidels" are among us—"the worse for mending, washed to fouler stains!" Secondly, we do not find our children changed in their nature by baptism. They are prone to evil as they grow up, even as the children of others, who do not dedicate them in baptism. But if baptism was regeneration, or was the agent which effects this new birth, baptized children would show its effects on their nature, by more holy tempers and dispositions, as their minds developed and their understandings strengthened. Yet I have not been able to perceive any difference, in this respect, between the children of Pedobaptists and those of Baptists and Quakers. Yet I do not question the propriety of infant baptism. I offer my children in this ordinance, as I would have circumcised them had I been a Jew, simply because it was an institution of God, which I was to obey, only because it was of divine appointment; without demanding of God a reason for the requirement.

But that water baptism is not regeneration is manifest from the Scriptures. We find in the Acts of the Apostles one instance in which regeneration preceded baptism, and one where it certainly did not accompany it. I allude to the cases of Cornelius the centurion, and of Simon the sorceror. Cornelius was directed by an angel, in a vision, to send for Peter, "who should tell him words"—teach him doctrines—"whereby he and all his house should be saved." He obeyed, and Peter came; and as he preached the gospel "the Holy Ghost fell on them"—all that heard and believed—"as on the disciples in the beginning." And "then," says Peter, "remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.'" But Peter added water baptism. "Can any man," says he, "forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" Can any man refuse the appointed outward and visible sign of that inward and spiritual grace, which these Gentile converts have so manifestly received? Can we refuse to admit into the visible church those whom Jesus Christ has so evidently admitted into his spiritual church? Now it will not be doubted, that they who had thus been baptized of the Holy Ghost were born again, born of God, made new creatures in Christ Jesus, by "the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." But if they were, then water baptism is neither regeneration itself, nor a necessary agent in effecting it; for Cornelius and his household were made the subject of the new birth antecedently to, and independently of, water baptism. In the case of Simon the sorceror, we have an instance of water baptism which was not accompanied by spiritual regeneration; for although he had "believed," and was "baptized," the apostle Peter solemnly assured him he was "in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity:" that he had "neither part nor lot in the matter"—neither part in Christ, nor lot in the spiritual Canaan—and he earnestly exhorted him to repentance. Is it not therefore as clear as demonstration can make it that not water baptism, but the baptism of the Holy Ghost, effects the new birth—creating us anew in Christ Jesus?

But, it may be asked, do not the words, "water and the Spirit," in the text, represent two agents as necessary in the work of regeneration; and make water as essential as the Holy Spirit in effecting the new birth? I humbly think not. First, because such an interpretation contradicts experience and observation. It would render salvation impossible to all who have not been baptized with water; and yet we have no evidence, nor well-founded reason, for supposing that the apostles, except Paul, were ever baptized with water; yet they were baptized with the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, and their testimony, and their lives and conversation subsequently, gave sufficient assurance that they had all been "created anew in Christ Jesus." Secondly, we have among us, in this our day, some who conscientiously believe the ordinance of baptism is not, and was not intended to be, of perpetual obligation in the church, and therefore do not submit themselves to it. But, among these, we cannot deny that we have known some, who not only testified to the saving truths of Christianity, but who have shown the "fruit of the Spirit" in their lives and conversation—even love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance.

Now, these things being manifest, all true Christians would be loth to adopt an interpretation of a declaration of our Lord which would exclude his own apostles, and thousands of apparently sincere believers since their time, from the kingdom of God. It is a fair presumption that the interpretation is wrong, when it leads us to such conclusion; and we are not shut up to such a conclusion by any necessity. The words of our Lord, "water and the Spirit," will bear a different rendering, and one more in accordance with the analogy of faith. It is a *Hebraism* — a Hebrew form of expression — signifying *spiritual water;* as if our Lord had said, "Except a man be born of spiritual water he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." The "teacher come from God" did not mean to speak of two agents as effecting the regeneration of the soul, but of one agent only; namely, the Holy Spirit. But he compares the operation of the Spirit to that of water, because, among natural things, it was one of those which most resembled it in its effects; being a cleansing, purifying agent. In proof of this meaning of the text, I refer to another passage of Scripture, in which the same agency of the Holy Spirit is spoken of under a different symbol, and in which the literal interpretation which has been contended for, in respect to the fifth verse of the third chapter of John, is impossible. John the Baptist says of our Lord, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." Now that John did not mean that our Lord would baptize with material fire, is too evident for cavil or dispute. He therefore used a similar Hebraism to that in the text, which only meant that our Lord would baptize his followers with "*the fire of the Holy Ghost;*" illustrating the operation of the Spirit by the cleansing, purifying effect of fire—"a refining fire—a purifier of silver."

But may we not go further, and understand our Lord as being so far from teaching that water baptism is a necessary agent in regeneration, that he intends to make Nicodemus understand its inadequacy, as an element, to such an end; and that nothing but spiritual water—the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost—could effect this change, so indispensable as a qualification for the kingdom of God? We must remember that Nicodemus was not only a Jew, but a Pharisee, and "a ruler of the Jews"—one of the seventy-two members of the Jewish Sanhedrim. As a descendant of Abraham, he supposed himself entitled to all the benefits and privileges of the Messiah's kingdom; which, in common with his countrymen, he supposed was to be a temporal kingdom, to which all the other kingdoms of the world were to become tributary. He is therefore astonished, when he is told by one whom he acknowledged to be "a teacher come from God"—though he does not seem to have, as yet, understood that he was the promised Messiah—that he must undergo a new birth before he could become a subject of Messiah's kingdom. The term "born again," was not new to Nicodemus. It was used in reference to every proselyte from the Gentiles entering into the Jewish covenant, who, being washed with water, was said to be "born again." And the rabbis carried their notion so far, that they said he was no longer akin to his Gentile father or mother, and might marry within the forbidden degrees of consanguinity without incest. All this Nicodemus knew, as a ruler of the Jews, and hence our Lord rebuked him when he understood the term "born again" literally, and asked, "Can a man be born again when he is old?" "Art thou a ruler in Israel, and knowest not these things?" answered the Saviour: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Which answer may be thus paraphrased:—

Are you a ruler of the Jews, and do not know that a Gentile convert to the Mosaic dispensation is washed with material water, and said to be "born again?" why, then, do you understand the term literally, when I apply it to the qualification necessary to both Jew and Gentile, in order to enter into the dispensation of the Messiah—the kingdom of God? Verily, verily, I say unto you, that although the ceremonial washing with material water may, according to your customs, entitle a heathen to circumcision, the seal of the Abrahamic covenant, yet nothing but spiritual water—the cleansing, purifying efficacy of the Holy Spirit—can constitute either Jew or Gentile a subject of the new covenant, and initiate him into the kingdom of the Messiah, which is wholly a spiritual kingdom, and not, as you imagine, a worldly kingdom. You do not understand this; but are there not things perceptible by your senses which you do not comprehend? The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit. If a man could be born again when he is old, in a natural way, it would avail him nothing: for that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again—must be born of the Spirit of God—in order to enter into the kingdom of God.

But whether this paraphrase be admitted or not, it must be clear that our Lord speaks of one agent only, as effecting the new birth; and that the expression "water and the Spirit," is simply a Hebraism, meaning, literally, spiritual water, and figuratively, the Holy Spirit.

But still the question recurs, What is this new birth, without which no one—however he may differ from the general character of his fellow-men in respect to moral deportment—can enter the kingdom of heaven? I answer, in the language of Scripture, it is "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." It is a work effected by the Holy Spirit in the soul of man, whereby the penitent sinner is enabled to believe in Christ with a heart unto righteousness, that is, unto justification; and by which he is renewed in the spirit of his mind: so that, from the hour in which this work is wrought in him, he is not only delivered from condemnation and filled with peace and joy in believing, but he has power over sin, willingly and joyfully walking, yea, running, in all the commandments and ordinances of God: "If any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creature"—there is a new creation—"old things have passed away, and behold all things have become new." The understanding has new views of the divine law, comprehending it in all the length and breadth of its requirements. The natural man often acknowledges himself a sinner, but with how little feeling does he confess it! He speaks of his sins as of freckles on his face. But the new man sees sin to be exceedingly sinful, and flies from it as from the face of a serpent. He sees, too, as the natural man does not, the broadness of the commandment, which reaches to the thoughts and intents of the heart, as well as to overt acts of transgression. He feels, as well as sees, that, by nature and practice, man is altogether sinful. There is no spiritual soundness. From the crown of the head to the sole of the foot all is wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores, which have not been bound up, neither mollified with ointment. But he also comprehends in his new state the fullness and the freeness of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, reaching to the chief of sinners; justifying the penitent who believe in him, and granting supporting and sustaining grace to all who walk by faith, relying upon, and trusting in, the promises of God. How dark and incomprehensible is all this to the natural man! How clear and indubitably true to the weakest of those who are born of the Holy Spirit!

The passions and affections are changed. Self-love is no longer selfishness. The new creature in Christ Jesus does not cease to seek his own happiness. He knows that God, in the Holy Scriptures, appeals to this instinct of his nature, in all his promises and threatenings. But self-love is perfectly compatible, and is even identified with loving God with all his heart, and his neighbor as himself. His happiness is not lessened, but augmented, by the happiness of others; and his supreme love to God leads him to desire that all should love him and serve him. Selfishness is the perversion and sinful degeneracy of self-love; and in its degeneracy and misapplication it produces envy, and malice, and revenge, and avarice, and unsanctified ambition. Self-love, reinstated in its proper place in the regenerated man, can indulge none of these unholy passions. The soul renewed in the likeness and image of God still seeks happiness; but it desires happiness only from the sense of the divine favor: and in this there is no room for envy, or malice, or revenge, or jealousy. "There is enough for all, enough for each, enough for evermore." Among the people of the world, the poor envy the rich; and the rich envy those who are still richer; or who are elevated higher by place, or worldly distinctions, than themselves. But no spiritual man ever envied the condition of a brother who was holier, and consequently happier, than himself. On the contrary, he loves his neighbor just in proportion as the image and superscription of his Lord is perceived—stands out in relief in his walk and conversation. It will be so in heaven. In the kingdom of our Father above we shall differ, as one star differeth from another star in glory. But as we envy not the holiness of a brother here, but love him exactly in proportion to our estimate of his holiness, so we shall love those in heaven, who outshine us, and stand nearer the throne than we do. But it would occupy too much of the time allotted to me to enlarge on this topic. Suffice it to say, that in the regenerated soul no human passion is destroyed; but all are converted, and sanctified to the great end of man's being—"to glorify God in his body and spirit which are his."

The new birth effects an entire spiritual change. All the affections of the soul are brought under the influence of new motives and principles. Hope, fear, desire, aversion, and all the other affections, still remain, but they are directed to new objects and sanctified to new purposes. The hopes which clung to earthly objects are now transferred to heavenly things. "Hope constitutes the chief blessing of life; and that hope only is rational of which we are sure it cannot deceive us." Such, only, is the hope which rests upon the immutable promises of God. Fear no longer hath torment; for the fear of man is taken away, and the renewed soul fears only Him who can cast both soul and body into hell. But this fear is mixed with a sure trust and confidence in his mercy, through the propitiation offered on Calvary, and the advocacy of Him who "ever liveth to make intercession for us." So that there is no longer anything painful in the emotion; but only a filial fear of offending a Father who hath assured us he loves his children better than earthly parents love their offspring. And then, as to the fear of affliction, or other changes in outward circumstances, it only begets proper precaution and diligence. It can produce no disturbance in the soul which implicitly relies upon the promise, "All things shall work together for good to them which love God." No matter what the worldly disaster which is apprehended may be, it is comprehended in the "all things" inventory, and is provided for in the promise. But we need not enlarge. All the other affections of the soul, like hope and fear, are brought under religious influence—into obedience to Christ; and, instead of being auxiliaries to sin, become tributaries to religion.

Thus the new birth is a radical, total change in the whole man, effected by supernatural agency. Not an outward change of behavior only, which may be, and often is, produced by prudential, worldly, and even mercenary motives, but an inward, spiritual renovation of the soul, renewing it in the image and likeness of God, even righteousness and true holiness, in which our first parent was created, and which he lost by disobedience.

II. But if this be the Scriptural view of regeneration, and if this new birth be an indispensable qualification for membership in Christ's spiritual church on earth, and for entrance into heaven, what are the EVIDENCES of the change? How is a man to assure himself that this spiritual change has passed upon him?

As in describing the new birth we have indulged in no metaphysical speculation, but kept close to the Scriptures, so, in stating the evidences which may be relied upon in judging of our own religious state, we may not go a hair's breadth beyond the directions given in the book of revelation, nor stop short of what it affirms.

Among the faculties of the soul there is one which, by common consent, we call consciousness, and which subserves to the soul the functions which are performed by the outward senses to the body. Hence every transition from mental pain to pleasure, and from pleasure to pain, is recognized by our consciousness—we say we are conscious of such and such mental perceptions and feelings. Now by the authority of Scripture we assert, that the first, in order of time, of the evidences of the change called the new birth, is the direct witness of the Holy Spirit, testifying to the believer's consciousness that his sins are forgiven, and that he is a child of God by adoption—the free, unmerited grace of God, through the atonement which is in Christ, and simple faith — trust, reliance, upon the promises of God made to penitent sinners through this atonement. The sinner convicted of sin by the word and Spirit of God, earnestly inquires the way of salvation. He learns that it is to be obtained only by "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ also." He learns that it is only by grace communicated by the Holy Spirit that he can comply with these conditions; but he learns, too, that "our heavenly Father giveth the Holy Spirit to them that ask him;" and betaking himself to prayer—breaking off his sins by repentance, and turning with "full purpose of heart unto God," he is enabled to cast himself upon Jesus as his Saviour and Mediator; and his faith is counted to him for righteousness. And now the Holy Spirit testifies to his consciousness of this pardon. He receives "not the Spirit of bondage again to fear, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby he cries, Abba, Father; and the Spirit itself beareth witness with his spirit that he is a child of God." See Rom. viii, 15, 16. The immediate first-fruits of this witness of the Spirit are "love, joy, and peace;" and there follow, "long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith"—an abiding trust in the promises of God—"meekness, and temperance: against such there is no law." See Gal. v, 22, 23. And, therefore, there can be no transgression nor condemnation while these abide in the heart and life of the believer.

How is it, then, that some contend that the only evidence of this new birth, and this adoption, is inferential—that is, derived from the manifestation of its fruits? Thus they state it in the form of a syllogism. "He who bears the fruits of the Spirit is born of the Spirit; but I bear the fruits of the Spirit; therefore I am born of the Spirit." It is contended that thus only we can infer that we have been "born again." Now we deny not, that he who is born of the Spirit will bear its fruits; on the contrary, we contend with the apostle John that he who is born of God doth not commit sin—doth not willingly transgress any known law of God; and that such a one, in order to preserve his justification, must steadily endeavor to "perfect holiness in the fear of God;" and a consciousness of sincerity in this respect, is the testimony of his own spirit, reason, or judgment, that he is a child of God. All that we contend for is, that this inferential evidence from the fruits of the Spirit cannot be had, or enjoyed, until these fruits appear; and that they cannot appear, nay, cannot exist, until, by some previous witness, the penitent sinner is assured of the forgiveness of his sins, and the revocation of the sentence of eternal death which he had incurred by transgression; and that this previous assurance is given by the direct testimony—this "bearing witness"—of the Holy Spirit, of which the apostle speaks.

The position, that the fruits of the Spirit must appear, must be enjoyed, before anything can be inferred from them, will not be denied; but the apostle places as first in order of time, the emotions of "love, joy, and peace," as such fruits. Now can the guilty, condemned sinner, burdened with a deep conviction of his guilt, and trembling under the fearful apprehension of the penalty due to his transgressions, have love, joy, and peace, until he is assured of forgiveness? The apostle speaks of filial love, the fruit of adoption. Must there not be an assurance of adoption before this love can be felt? He speaks of joy and peace arising from a sense of pardon and reconciliation; but can these emotions obtain until there is an assurance of pardon and reconciliation? Surely not. A man under sentence of death for a violation of the law of his country, does not manifest these emotions, until he is assured of a pardon from the governor. He may hope that his pardon is already made out in the council chamber, but he is filled with anxiety, and fearful apprehensions, until he receives it, and is assured his hope has not deceived him. Until there is assurance, the idea of peace and joy is to the utmost degree preposterous and absurd. And so it is with the sinner, until he is assured he has "passed from death unto life." He cannot have the fruits of the Spirit, "love, joy, and peace," until he is justified by faith in the atonement; and this justification is testified to his consciousness by the direct witness of the Holy Spirit. It is, therefore, evident that the witness of the Spirit of God, in the work of justification and adoption, must necessarily precede the testimony of our own spirit—the inferential evidence from the fruits of the Spirit. The latter cannot exist without the former.

The truth is, that it is this supernatural agency, promised in the Scriptures, which chiefly distinguishes the Christian religion from all other religions. This is the very point of departure between Christianity and all the schemes of religion which have been invented by man. These schemes may be considered under two general divisions—paganism and natural religion, or deism. Paganism, perceiving the universal depravity of man, and being ignorant of any remedy, tolerated what it could not cure, and allowed, nay imbodied, even in its religious services, the vilest indulgences of passion and appetite; incorporating them into its most sacred mysteries. The whole system was inconsistent with the holiness of God. Natural religion, a modern invention, enlightened by the revelation it affects to reject, has a more just conception of the divine nature and attributes, and prescribes a more pure and perfect rule of life. But it requires an impossibility. It would exact of man in his fallen, degenerate, and corrupt nature, obedience to a perfect rule of life. It is the Egyptian, requiring the full tale of brick without the straw. It is wholly unadapted to the universal condition of man. Christianity alone proposes a scheme of salvation, at once consistent with the divine holiness, and suited to the state of man in his sinfulness and helplessness. It offers supernatural aid. It proposes by the agency of the Spirit of

God, procured simply for the asking, to renew the soul, and strengthen it by all might and power in the inner man, to walk in the statutes and commandments of God blameless. It proposes to "make the tree good, that the fruit may be good also."

And why should it be thought a thing incredible that God should thus renovate and renew man's spirit? Is not all nature full of such marvelous works of God? Can any philosopher comprehend the phenomena of the first any more than of the second birth? And are not the most unaccountable, inscrutable transformations, continually going on, even in the lowest orders of life? Of the myriads of butterflies which sport over yonder lawn, every one was but lately a loathsome caterpillar. Have you ever seen a dragon-fly? have you ever admired the exquisite mechanism of its double wings, the beauty of its varied colorings, and the lustre of its irradiations? That beautiful fly was lately a worm, a grub, inhabiting a dunghill, and deriving its nutriment from the vilest ordure. But it entered into its crysalis state; and then appeared to be dead. Its covering was hard and incrusted all about to the feeling. But within was a germ of the old nature, going through the transforming process of a new birth; and now it has emerged into a new existence. Disdaining its former dark and filthy habitation, it soars aloft, and sports in the sunbeams. Loathing its former food, it now sips the dew of heaven, and feeds upon the nectar of flowers. So the regenerated soul: "If any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creature"—there is a new creation—"old things are passed away, and behold all things have become new."

III. THE NECESSITY FOR THE NEW BIRTH. It is unnecessary to prove this, otherwise than by adverting to the authority of Him who has declared its indispensable necessity as a qualification for his kingdom; whether in its preparatory stage on earth, or the consummation of its glory in heaven. But remember, this "teacher come from God"—"the brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his person"—does not say, Except a man be born again, he *ought not* to see the kingdom of God. This might have allowed the supposition that, nevertheless, it was possible. Nor does he say he *shall not*, as if it were forbidden only by absolute decree. But he says "*he can-*

not"—he has no fitness. Heaven is a holy place, and its society is holy. Nothing unclean, nothing impure, can enter there. And again, he *cannot*, because he has no title to it. The heirship depends upon the adoption. "If children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ." Surely nothing can be more futile, more utterly absurd, than to substitute any other condition of salvation, any other hope of heaven, than the one condition, the one hope, which the rightful Sovereign of heaven and of earth proposes in the gospel. Let us make haste to secure the possession of this passport to eternal life and glory.

To do this we must not only give no ear to the systems of religion which are the inventions of men—to paganism, which is inconsistent with the holiness of God; and natural religion, or Deism, which is not adapted to the condition of human nature in its fallen state; making no provision for our weakness, our utter helplessness, under the tyranny of sin and Satan; offers no supernatural aid, no means of deliverance from our natural corruption and depravity:—we must not only abandon all hope in these utterly false systems, but we must equally renounce and repudiate adulterated systems of Christianity, consisting of some of the elements of the gospel, rendered nugatory by foreign admixture—human interpolations which destroy the life and power of gospel truth.

Among these monstrous hybrids we may mention Romanism, with its priestly absolution; its doctrine of penance, in which it is taught that a sinner may make satisfaction to God for his sins, by voluntary corporeal suffering, and giving alms; its transubstantiation and worship of the consecrated wafer; its mass, in which it is pretended that the offering of Christ is reiterated, as a true and proper sacrifice for the living and the dead; and its purgatory, in which fire is substituted for the blood of Christ, which alone cleanses from all sin. Puseyism, committing all the blessings and benefits of the gospel to a corporation of bishops, so that no one can have any interest in Christ, or derive any benefit from his atonement, but by their leave, and by submission to their requirements, however contrary to the doctrines of the gospel; its baptismal regeneration, borrowed from Rome; its "priestly intervention" in the administration of the Lord's supper, as expressed by a bishop in our own country, "that sins may be forgiven;" all, whether Romanist or Puseyite, making "void the law of God through their traditions," and "teaching for doctrine the commandments of men."

Nor these alone. There are other interpolations of the gospel, equally dangerous. The Socinians, with their salvation without an adequate saviour; their pardon without atonement; and their human compliance with the divine requirements, without regeneration, or supernatural change in man's nature by the renovating and renewing agency of the Holy Ghost. These make Christ a man, not God, "by whom" and "for whom all things were made." They teach that Christ died as a martyr, not as a sacrifice for the sins of the world; his death they say was testamentary, not vicarious: denying, or perverting by verbal criticisms, the whole tenor and the plainest declarations of both the Old and the New Testament concerning Christ. And the Universalists, with their scheme for saving men *in their sins*, not *from their sins*. He who would be saved must fly from all these systems—Romanism, Puseyism, Socinianism, commonly called Unitarianism, and Universalism, as from the face of a serpent. They are one and all, simply human schemes to get to heaven without holiness. God has devised, and executed, and clearly revealed, his plan of human salvation. He declares, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." And as this can only be effected by the Spirit of God, "he giveth the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." In answer to prayer offered through the Mediator who hath entered once for all into the holy of holies, that is, into heaven, for us, he gives the grace of repentance and faith, followed by pardon, regeneration, holiness, and heaven. Let no man beguile you with philosophy and vain deceit. "In him"—in Christ our Lord—"dwelt the fullness of the Godhead *bodily*." That is substantially, not *figuratively*, as the shechinah between the cherubim, in the holy of holies. Not influentially, as in all good men; but substantially, really, without any figure of speech at all. "He is the propitiation for our sins." "He bare our sins in his own body on the tree." He is our Mediator before the throne of the heavenly grace: "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." And the promise is reiterated throughout the revelation of God, that all, even the chief of sinners, may come to the Father through him, not only with hope, but with assurance of acceptance; and all this without the intervention of a human priest, or money, or price. Thanks be unto God for this unspeakable gift; this present, free, and full salvation.

Dr. Pusey, in his Letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, complains of the Wesleyans that they teach the people to expect an assurance of pardon and regeneration through the "direct witness of the Holy Spirit," in the commencement of the Christian race, and as a preparation for the race; whereas he says it is only given at the end of the race, as a reward. Now neither the Wesleyans in England, nor in this country, can deny this charge. On the contrary, we confess it, and glory in the truth of it. We testify to all men, that this "direct witness of the Holy Spirit" of pardon, acceptance in Christ, and of regenerating grace, is the common privilege of all penitent sinners. They have a Scriptural right to look for it, and claim it as conferred by the divine charter of salvation: to expect it through faith alone, as a preparation for the race they are called upon to run, the prize of which is "everlasting life." The book of God affirms it; and a cloud of witnesses confirm it by their experience, and by the fruits of it in their lives and conversation. God grant we may never depart from the testimony of our fathers. To him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

THE END.

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